


LIBRARY
OF THE
UNIVERSITY
OF ILLINOIS

823
M582i
v.2

INNES OF BLAIRAVON.

VOL. II.



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2009 with funding from
University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

INNES OF BLAIRAVON

BY

COLIN MIDDLETON

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LONDON :

HURST AND BLACKETT, LIMITED,

13, GREAT MARLBOROUGH STREET

1893.

All Rights Reserved.

823
M582i
v. 2

INNES OF BLAIRAVON.

CHAPTER I.

‘“ I may not speak,
And yet I will, and tell my love all plain.”
· · · · · : · · · · ·
So said he one fair morning, and all day
His heart beat awfully against his side ;
And to his heart he inwardly did pray
For power to speak.’

SOME weeks after the end of term, Amy and George were strolling along the great elm-drive at Blairavon after breakfast. It was a very hot morning in July, and as they came near the river George said,

‘ Would you like to come on the river, Amy? It is too hot to walk. I will scull you up to the Adder Pool, and we can drift down with the stream.’

‘That will be glorious, George,’ said Amy. ‘I wish Allan were here though; he comes to-morrow, his “vivâ” is on to-day. I do hope he will do well.’

‘I wouldn’t put too much faith in his doing well, Amy; he’s been awfully idle, you know.’

‘Well, I suppose it doesn’t matter much, but I should like him to do well.’

George sculled her slowly up the stream, and a wild desire seized him to throw away the sculls and clasp her to his heart (he would probably have upset the boat if he had, but what is a trifle like probable death from drowning to a young man in love?) He restrained himself, however. He had made up his mind to ask her to be his wife on that day, and he also had made up his mind that he would be very cool about it. He sculled up to the Adder Pool and turned the boat.

Amy noticed that he was strangely silent, but she did not pay much attention

to that, because they were such very old friends that they could afford to be silent. After taking in his sculls, he put his elbows on his knees, and looked at Amy very earnestly, and said,

‘Are you comfortable, Amy?’

‘Quite, thank you, George.’

This was a bad beginning, so he tried again, but this time no sound issued from his mouth at all. His throat was dry, and he felt absolutely incapable of doing or saying anything. All this time the boat was slowly drifting down the stream, and Amy was lazily letting her hand trail in the water, and was idly watching the cows grazing on the bank. George tried again. He got as far as ‘Amy——’ and then he stuck once more.

‘Well, George, what is it?’ said Amy, indifferently, still looking at the bank.

‘Amy, I want you to listen to me for a little time.’

‘Certainly,’ said Amy, turning to look

at him, and then she saw in his face that some strange emotion had possession of him, and a curious feeling, half-wonder, half-fear, came over her.

‘I can’t say what I want to as I should like, but it amounts to this: we have known each other all our lives almost, and I want to know if you will think of spending the rest of it with me. Amy dear, will you be my wife? I have loved you, I think, since the first day I saw you. I have never cared to look at anyone else but you.’

Amy looked frightened, and said, hesitatingly,

‘Oh, George, I never thought of this. Put me ashore, please. I am so sorry. I must go to the house. You must not talk of it again.’

‘Then, do you refuse, Amy?’ said George, in a despairing tone. ‘It means everything in the world to me.’

Amy answered, in a frightened way,

‘ I don’t know—yes, I am afraid it means no—I cannot marry you, George.—I have never thought about it—I am so sorry that this happened.—We were such good friends, and I always thought how nice it was to have you near us.’

‘ But won’t you think of it, Amy ?’

‘ Don’t talk about it, George, please. I cannot think about it, I am frightened. I cannot marry you.’ Just then the boat bumped up against the bank and Amy said, ‘ I think we had better go in ;’ and then she shivered. ‘ I think it has turned cold.’

George helped her out, tied up the boat, and they walked in silence, side by side, up the long elm drive to the house.

At luncheon George said to Mrs. Innes,

‘ I am sorry to say I must go home by the four o’clock train, Mrs. Innes. I have some business which I must attend to at once.’

‘ But, my dear George, Allan is coming

back to-morrow morning, and I thought you were going to stay till the 12th.'

'Yes, Mrs. Innes, but I must go.'

Mrs. Innes looked at Amy and saw everything at once in her face, and said,

'I am very sorry, George. I will let them know about your luggage.'

So George went, and curiously enough from that very day Amy began to regard him in quite a different light. Love was dawning in her heart, which had never been stirred by such an emotion before. Many a girl never thinks of falling in love with a man until she is asked to do so. She may regard him as a pleasant companion, but never dreams of love until some day the man asks her to love him, and she is taken by surprise, and possibly gives an answer for which she may be sorry all the days of her life. But this is luckily not often the case, because the man who is really in earnest will not be content with one refusal, but returns to the charge more determined than before.

Next day Allan came home, and on finding that George was gone said,

‘What a beastly swindle! I thought he was going to be here till the 12th anyhow. Mother dear, you must write and ask Lady Anstruther and Mildred and Maginnis to come over here in September, and then George can come too. Yes, let’s have a big house-party. M’Evoy says that there are more partridges than he has ever known. Lady Grizel can come, and Wedderburn. Say yes, mother, and we can have a dance.’

‘Very well, Allan, I will ask them, but I don’t think George will come,’ and then she told him that Amy had refused him the day before.

‘Well, I suppose she knows her own mind best, but she must be uncommonly fastidious if she wants anyone better than old George. It can’t be that insufferable fool Wedderburn.’ (Now Wedderburn was not an insufferable fool by any means, but

an excellent and moreover a comely specimen of a young Scotch laird, but Allan, being angry, said the first thing that came into his head.)

‘No, dear, it isn’t Mr. Wedderburn, nor anyone else. I think Amy was taken by surprise, that is all.’

In a fortnight it was known that Allan had only got a third class in classical moderations, at which he was furious, although he had no one to blame in the matter save himself; in fact, this it was that made him furious.

Allan and his father were sitting over their wine after dinner on the night that the news arrived, and Richard said,

‘Well, Allan, my boy, I think you ought to have got more than a third, though I haven’t much to say on the point, because I did not do so very well myself.’

‘But, father, they told me when I went up that I was safe for a second at least, and

that I might possibly get a first if I read very hard. Those fusty old dons don't know anything.'

'I daresay what they said was true, Allan, but then you know it is possible to get rusty, and I daresay you have forgotten a great deal of what you knew when you went up.'

Allan knew that this was only too true, and so there was nothing more to be said.

Richard continued,

'However, Allan, we won't say anything more about it. It's no use crying over spilt milk, but I think you ought to stick hard at law now. I want you to go to the Bar, and to work hard there, not that it is absolutely necessary, because, of course, you will have this place and a good income to live upon when I die, but it is a good thing for a man to work. It is true that the Black Hawk has not turned out *quite* so well as I expected—I thought the output would double or treble itself in

time, but it seems to remain always about the same.'

'All right, father, I'll plug into law when I go up again, but it is awfully hard to work at Oxford, and when I am at home there always seems to be so much to do.'

'I know it is hard, Allan, and I can quite believe that it gets harder every day. In my time a man could work if he chose, and at the same time see all the men he wanted to. But university life has become much more social than it used to be, I fancy. In my day one did not know many men well outside one's own college, but now apparently it doesn't matter where a man is, he seems to know everybody. I am afraid that all that sort of thing is very bad for reading. A man must have indeed a strong will, if he intends to work conscientiously.'

'You make me horribly ashamed of myself by being so kind to me, dad, and I

will promise you that I *will* read for the next two years.'

'I am sure you will,' said his father; and they left the table.

As Mrs. Innes had predicted, George declined to come in September, but the others did, among them Lord and Lady Maginnis.

Mildred Anstruther had married him three years before, and was very happy with him. As George had said, he was not at all a bad soul, if one could only get over his amazing ugliness and his lisp. He had shown by an exceedingly terse, logical, and conclusive speech in the House of Lords on the land question in Ireland that he was by no means a fool. Allan could not endure him, he had a natural contempt for a man who had no physical strength, and who could not shoot over-well, or fish. General Ainslie, Lady Grizel, and young Wedderburn came, the latter only too glad of the opportunity of basking in the light of Amy's eyes.

General Ainslie had said that ‘By gad, he had had such an uncommon pleasant time, the last time he was at Blairavon, that he was only too glad to accept another invitation;’ to which Mrs. Innes replied that it was very kind of him to say so. ‘Not at all, my dear,’ continued the general, ‘not at all, I am sure the sight of your face would do any man good;’ then he added aloud, though apparently he was only thinking, ‘Here I am making a d——d fool of myself as usual;’ then turning to Mrs. Innes, ‘By Jove, Kate, I beg your pardon—I am afraid I swore. I have got into such shocking bad habits from living in that d——that is, I am really not fit to speak to a lady.’

The general conceived a great dislike for Lord Maginnis.

‘Why the devil can’t the man speak like an ordinary human being?’ he growled out to Allan one very hot day as they were coming home from shooting part-

riges. ‘A fellow who can’t speak his own language properly, ought not to speak it at all—he ought to be a Spaniard or some heathenish foreigner.’

Now the general was waxing old, and moreover he was fat, and it had been a very hot day, and the general’s liver was apt to get out of order from having eaten of many strange dishes, seasoned with red pepper, in India. He had in consequence shot very badly that day, and he was angry, and wanted some one on whom to vent his wrath. He was walking with his arm through Allan’s, and Allan said,

‘I don’t like him either, general, but George says he is a good enough fellow when you know him well. His appearance is certainly against him, but then you know, general, “one shouldn’t judge people by appearances.”’

The general smiled, and said,

‘That’s one to you, Allan ; I remember saying the same thing to you on a previous

occasion ; I daresay he is a good soul, and I a cantankerous old wretch. Here's the house at last ; let's go and have a whisky-and-seltzer.'

After dinner they were sitting over their wine, and the general and Lord Maginnis were having a heated discussion on the Government policy in Egypt. The general was a red-hot, blind Conservative. Maginnis was also a Conservative, but, being a wise man, he by no means followed blindly all the tenets of his party. He claimed the right, as a reasoning human being, of thinking for himself. The general was getting much the worst of the argument, and was beginning to lose his temper, when a servant came in, and said to Mr. Innes,

'One of Sir George Anstruther's servants would like to speak to you immediately, sir.'

'Tell him to come in here, John.'

'Yessir.'

In a minute or two one of George's grooms stood at the door. Allan knew him, and said,

‘What’s the matter, Henry?’

‘Sir George was thrown from his horse this afternoon, sir, and he sent me over to let you know, in case any wrong account should come to my lady’s ears and frighten her, sir.’

‘Is he badly hurt?’

‘He says not, sir; but begging pardon for making so free, sir, I takes the liberty of thinking different. His horse stumbled going in at the East Lodge, and he pitched right on his forehead, sir. He lay insensible about five minutes; but he walked up to the house, and then he sent me over here. But he looked very queer, sir. Beg pardon, if I make too free, sir.’

‘Not at all,’ said Richard. ‘You’d better stop here to-night. Get some food in the servants’ hall, and you can go over the first thing in the morning.’

‘I’ll go over by the first train, father, and see that he is all right. I shall be back in the afternoon,’ said Allan.

He went over to Ardarrochar the next day, but he did not come back that afternoon, nor indeed for many afternoons. He found George suffering from concussion of the brain. He telegraphed for Lady Anstruther, and said at the same time that he was going to stay with George for a time. He had not a very serious attack, but in his delirium he was constantly calling out for Amy. When he recovered consciousness, and saw Allan, he said,

‘Hullo, Allan. I’ve been ill, I suppose. Oh, yes, I remember it all now. Got pitched off my horse. It is a funny thing, I seem to have been talking to you and your sister all the time, and the first thing I see is you standing beside me. Have I been in bed long?’

‘Oh, no, only four days; but you are all right now, eh?’

‘ Only a little queer about the head.’

Two days afterwards Allan was sitting talking to George, who said,

‘ By Jove ! Allan, I was pretty miserable before I had that cropper. I don’t think I should have minded very much if it had killed me. I don’t mind talking to you about it, and I daresay you know that a couple of months ago I proposed to Amy and she refused me. She seemed to be utterly taken aback, too, that is the curious thing. I should have thought that she must have seen long ago that she was the only girl I cared a rap about.’

‘ I was very sorry, too, George. My mother told me about it the day I came back from Oxford ; but I suppose it can’t be helped. You wouldn’t care to marry a girl against her will. And, besides, I don’t know that she knew her own mind. Girls never do,’ said this exceedingly wise young man. Possibly he was speaking from the depth of his own vast experience.

‘Do you think so?’ said George, eagerly. ‘I must get out of this beastly bed. I feel as fit as possible now. Hang it! what’s the good of moping in bed. I shall get all right once I am out in the open air.’

‘Steady, George, you mustn’t get excited, or you will be ill again.’

But from that moment George began to recover in a marvellous manner, and Lady Anstruther said to Allan,

‘It is very kind of you, Allan, to have stayed here so long, when you have such a pleasant party at home, but it has been the best thing for him. He never is so happy as he is when in your company, and before his accident he was dreadfully low-spirited.’

‘I think I know what was the cause of it, and it can’t be helped, though I must say I wish it had been otherwise.’

Allan went home again, and as he was driving up the avenue towards the house, he met General Ainslie stumping along.

Allan stopped and got out of the dog-cart, and the general said,

‘Thank the Lord you have come back, my boy. I think I should have committed murder soon. That lisping idiot Maginnis and that conceited puppy Wedderburn have nearly driven me wild. Come for a walk with me, and let me get some of this nonsense out of my head.’

‘All right, general. Take my things up to the house, Alexander, and tell them that I have gone for a walk with General Ainslie.’

‘M’Evoy told me, sir, that his lordship was hoping you would go out ferretting this afternoon.’

‘The devil,’ said the general.

‘Tell M’Evoy to let his lordship know that I have strained my arm slightly at Ardarrochar, and that I want to rest it a little.’

‘Yes, sir.’

‘It is quite true, general. I did it lift-

ing George out of bed one day, when he was unconscious, so you need not look at me like that.'

'I wasn't looking at you like that; besides, white lies are always admissible, especially in a case like this when you have the opportunity of talking to a reasonable human being, instead of two lunatics like Maginnis and Wedderburn.'

Allan could not understand this sudden fury on the general's part against these two men. The fact of the matter was that he had been disgracefully beaten in an argument at lunch, and was still smarting under his defeat. They strolled on up the hill facing the house, and up the road leading through the pine-woods, until suddenly they came on to the moor, and looking back saw the chimneys of the house smoking far down below.

'Ah, I feel better now,' said the general. 'I like talking to you, Allan, and listening to your opinions on things in general;

not that your conversation is particularly intellectual, but it is refreshing to a battered old warrior like me to study the innocence of youth.'

Allan laughed, and said,

'You are not particularly complimentary this afternoon, general.'

The general stopped and laughed too, and said,

'I like being rude to you, Allan; I know you don't mind it, and it lets off steam. When you get to my age, you will find that your temper gets shorter. Come, let's turn back. By Jove, look below—what a glorious view! Early autumn is very pretty. Look at all those shades of yellow on the trees in the park. Heigho! I am afraid my autumn days are pretty nearly over. I am getting an old man, Allan. I am nearly seventy. Well, I suppose we must "a' gang toddlin' down the hill" some day; but I would give a good deal to be as young as you again.'

As they came into the park again, they saw two figures strolling along the grass-ride in front of them, and in a few minutes Allan saw that the two figures were his sister and Wedderburn.

‘The deuce!’ said Allan aloud, and then to himself, ‘Mother only asked him for a week, and he’s been here a fortnight already.’

As they came nearer, Allan saw that they seemed to be enjoying themselves thoroughly.

‘I don’t admire your sister’s taste, Allan,’ said the general. ‘I think that’s pretty nearly a case.’

When they caught them up, Wedderburn greeted Allan heartily, and Amy kissed him, and said,

‘Oh, Allan, I am so glad you have come back. How is George?’ and as she said it she blushed, and Allan thought to himself, ‘That’s all right.’

‘He’s all right again, Amy, I wanted

him to come back with me, but he would not come.'

'Take my arm, Amy,' said the general, 'and we will stroll on homewards.'

'Certainly, general,' said Amy; and Wedderburn, to his chagrin, had to finish his walk with Allan.

Before going up to Oxford again, Allan had a conversation with his father, consequent on a letter he had received from his tutor, who thought 'that law was too narrow a subject, that he had hoped he might have read philosophy, but supposed that was out of the question, as he had only got a third in Mods; and that under the circumstances modern history would be his best plan.'

'I think he is right,' said Allan. 'I can read law after I go down, when I am in town.'

'Very well,' said Richard. 'Do what you like, Allan, only I do hope you will do some work.'

The general thought that all that nonsense of cramming a lot of stuff into a boy's head, which he immediately forgot, was a mistake. Much better let him take his degree in June, and go into the Army. No training like the Army for a boy. A good soldier is worth all your barristers put together.'

'Very possibly, general,' said Richard, 'but Kate won't allow it. We will give you Jack.'

By this time the party had broken up. Lord and Lady Maginnis had gone three days before, and Wedderburn had followed them the next day, looking very unhappy, and Allan putting that fact and the fact that Amy had not appeared to say good-bye, together, came to the conclusion that he had asked a certain question and had had a negative answer.

Allan had insisted that Lady Grizel should stay on after the others had left. The general had gone saying that he hoped

that he should live till he was a hundred, if it were only for the pleasure of coming to Blairavon every summer.

‘My dear Mrs. Innes, I seem to live here,’ said Lady Grizel. ‘I have been here nearly five weeks, and I was here at Christmas too.’

‘If you are content to stay, we are only too glad that you should.’

So Lady Grizel stayed, and passed most of her time in rambling in the woods with Allan, until the time came for him to go to Oxford again.

CHAPTER II.

‘περὶ φρένας ἤλυθεν ὄινος.’

HALF-PAST seven in the evening of the 30th of November, 1883. In a small street off the High in Oxford stands the drill-hall of the Oxfordshire Volunteers. About seventy undergraduates were standing chatting in knots in the passage, and in the ante-room of the drill-hall itself; but the defence of their country was not the thought which was paramount in their minds. The majority of them were in ordinary evening dress; others wore, in addition to this, a tartan silk riband across the shirt front, and three or four—but these were the bolder spirits—wore kilts.

Allan was one of those present, but from past experience he knew that it was

unwise to wear a kilt on this festive occasion. It was St. Andrew's Day, and the members of the Caledonian Club and their friends had met, as is their custom, to do honour to the patron saint of Scotland. It is curious that our method of doing honour to any person or thing should always be the same, should consist in eating and drinking too much. Such is the case, and one supposes it will always be the case. It is an excellent excuse for a public dinner,—say, for example, it is the anniversary of the foundation of the home for the starving poor. The directors meet, and over choice wines and costly dishes wax eloquent over the nobility of the institution, which provides three times daily, for thirty deserving paupers, a farthing's worth of bread, and some garbage which, by the company, is allowed the name of meat. Or say the society for propagating cleanliness among the inhabitants of the Maldivé Islands meet for the same noble purpose. The

president, with tears in his eyes, and Deutz and Geldermann in his hand, informs his brother directors that 'according to the last report no fewer than five of the inhabitants had, during the last year, submitted to be washed with Pears' soap.' This statement is received with thunders of applause, and the secretary, calling the head-waiter, whispers in his ear, 'This is a great meeting, John, you had better have up ten more magnums.' However, let us come back to St. Andrew's Day in 1883. Seventy young gentlemen were going to celebrate it with due honour, though one doubts very much if St. Andrew himself would have commended the method in which his memory was being honoured.

The president having arrived, the men trooped in to dinner. They sat at three tables, arranged in the form of a horse-shoe; the president sitting in the middle of the table at the end. Allan sat on his right, and the dinner began. Doubtless the Spirit

of Evil must have had a lot of spare time on his hands that evening, and, in consequence, have devoted his entire attention to the drill-hall in Oxford. Everyone seemed in the wildest spirits, and the talk was loud, and the laughter boisterous, even before the soup had been removed. There was none of that air of solemnity so common at the beginning of a dinner, be it public or private. At this particular dinner the waiters took care that no one should remain thirsty for one instant, and the champagne flowed continuously. All went well until the haggis came in, preceded by the piper of the London Scottish Volunteers. Anyone who had had an observant eye would have seen that by this time most of the waiters were walking with uncertain and erratic steps. But everything was forgotten in the sound of the pipes. Everyone knows that it is customary to drink a small glass of neat whisky after eating haggis—a most neces-

sary and salutary custom. The English waiters, not being skilled in the knowledge of Scotch meats and drinks, and merely being told that whisky was drunk after haggis, brought up the national drink in large quantities, and placed it on the tables. After this my informant's account is not very clear, but it amounts to this. The piper played two or three things, and the men, having nothing else to do, drank each other's health in whisky. The waiters had never returned after the haggis had been brought in, and the dinner, so far as the eatables were concerned, had apparently come to an end. An hour went by, and still no food appeared: by this time, however, nobody cared much whether there was any food or not. Everybody was talking at once, and at one end of the room a man was standing on the table contentedly singing a song, with no listeners. The president was rapping on the table with his wooden hammer, and

hoarsely calling for order. Finding this of no avail, he did not improve matters by trying to 'pick off' the songster with bananas and apples. Every bullet has its billet, they say, and one of the wandering apples hit the secretary on the nose just as he was in the middle of the peroration of a speech, addressed to nobody in particular, on nothing at all. The secretary thereupon sat down, but some ill-disposed person having abstracted his chair, he sat on the floor, and there lay and slept until some one trod on him, when he got up and started back to college in a huff. The president, who, to do him justice, was comparatively sober, sent the piper, a man called Mackay, he was a Ross-shire man, to go and see what had happened to the waiter and the food. In a few minutes he came back, and said, with a broad grin on his face,

'She niver saw such things, whatefer: there was no waiters awake, and ta cook—

well, ta cook was asleep in ta ash-pan.'

The piper was again dispatched to find some champagne, and the dinner proceeded. The president, who was more nimble with his feet than with his tongue, having procured some sort of order, rose and said,

'Gentlemen, I rise to propose to rise—no, I mean to propose the toast of the evening, Her Most Gracious Majesty Saint Andrew—no, hang it, I'm no good at speeches, let's have a dance.'

In a moment the piper was playing reels, and the tables were danced or thrown to the ground. Those who could dance reels, danced them; and those who could not, kicked up their heels and yelled. After this my informant tells me that they must have left the hall, because they seemed to be dancing in front of the 'Mitre,' and there were four bagpipes instead of only one pair, and they were all playing different tunes, and after that he does not remember anything more than

that, next morning, he found a notice on his table to say that the senior proctor would like to see him at two o'clock.

All this may appear very revolting, but it is necessary in this book to relate, as nearly as possible, some of the events in the life of the hero thereof. Fond mothers must not imagine that such scenes do not occur at the universities. They do still among a certain set. Rowdiness is dying out, it is true, but it is dying hard. Luck was certainly against the Caledonian Club on that occasion, for, had the waiters only kept sober, probably nothing of the sort would have occurred. Many a mother who pictures to herself dear George or Harry at nine o'clock in the morning with his Homer in front of him, and a cup of tea by his side, reading hard, as the dear boy always does, would hardly recognise her son if she were to see him at that hour with dishevelled hair, bloodshot eyes, and flushed face, eagerly lapping soda-water

out of the largest vessel he possessed. Fathers know about these things at least, or make a very shrewd guess at them, having possibly seen something of the sort in their own youth. Allan, throughout the entire previous evening, had been perfectly sober, and had, moreover, left comparatively early. He never got drunk. Some one had said to him,

‘You can’t get drunk, Innes, I believe, with that infernal hard, Scotch head of yours.’

Allan had laughed, and replied,

‘I don’t try to get drunk, and I don’t mean to.’

On the following morning Allan woke late, looked at his watch, and said,

‘By Jove, twenty minutes to ten. I can just get in time for Winckworth’s lecture at ten.’

He got up, took his bath, and dressed, having previously shouted to his scout to bring him some coffee. He came into his

sitting-room, and saw the ominous slip of paper with 'The Senior Proctor,' etc. Allan whistled.

'Last night's business, I suppose. Well, I have assisted at some orgies, but I must say that beat anything I ever saw. An infernal shame those waiters getting drunk. I told Menzies he ought to get some one to look after them.'

He strolled out to his lecture in Winckworth's rooms. It was a small in-college lecture, so it was held in the don's rooms. Allan knocked at the door at five minutes past ten, and, being bidden to 'Come in,' he came in, and saying 'Good-morning,' sat down at a desk, saying to himself, seeing no one else was there, 'Early, I suppose; he don't usually begin till ten minutes past.' Then he noticed that Winckworth had not his gown on; a curious thing for him, as he was very punctilious.

Winckworth went on writing at the

window for a minute or two, and then he turned to Allan and said, with his head on one side,

‘ Well, Innes, what can I do for you ? ’

‘ I have come to lecture, sir. ’

Winckworth smiled, and said,

‘ I’m afraid you are a trifle out-of-date, Innes. ’

Allan looked at him wonderingly, and said,

‘ This is Thursday, isn’t it, sir ? And you lecture on Tuesdays and Thursdays at ten. ’

‘ That is a matter of purely antiquarian interest, ’ said Winckworth.

‘ I am afraid I don’t quite understand you, sir. ’

‘ Look at the clock. ’

Allan saw that it was ten minutes past *eleven*, and said,

‘ By Jove, I have over-slept myself horribly ; I am very sorry, sir ; ’ and he rose to go.

‘Don’t go for a minute or two, Innes;’ and, as he said it, Winckworth came from the window and put his hand on Allan’s shoulder. ‘You were at that Caledonian dinner last night, I suppose? I know you are a member.’

‘Yes, sir, I was there.’

‘What earthly good can you get out of a thing like that, Innes? I know perfectly well that, by nature, you would revolt at an orgy of that kind, and yet you go and assist at what I am told has been the most disgraceful scene known in the university for nearly thirty years.’

Allan thought to himself that this was rather an exaggeration, but then he did not know all.

‘You began the term so well, Innes, you can easily get a first in History if you go on reading as you have done, and the company you were in last night can do nothing but lower your ideas of everything.’

Allan said they were good fellows enough, and that the circumstances must be taken into consideration. Winckworth, who only knew the effect and not the cause, said,

‘There is nothing to be said in extenuation. It resolved itself into a mere pot-house orgy, so I am told, and that is hardly the thing one expects in Oxford.’

‘Well, sir, I think I can promise you that this shall be the very last thing of that sort which I shall take part in.’

‘Thank you, Innes; if you will fight against your good-nature a little, you will do much better.’

Allan went out feeling rather ashamed, and said to himself,

‘What a brick that fellow is, and what a beast I am. Well, here’s good-bye to the Caledonian Club, and to loo and wine-clubs in general. He went back to his rooms, sat down in a chair before his fire, yawned, and then picked up Stubbs’s ‘Con-

stitutional History.' He gazed at a page for ten minutes, jumped up, hurled the book against the wall, exclaiming, 'Bah! I can't read any of that infernal rot this morning. I shall go for a walk over Headington, and get some of the recollection of last night's debauch out of my head.' He took his stick and started out over Magdalen Bridge, calling on the way for his fox-terrier. As he went through the keen frosty air he said to himself, 'This is better than wine-parties, headache, and stale tobacco smoke.' Then he passed himself in review, and found himself wanting. 'At any rate, I have read this term, and except for last night and those two nights at the "Phoenix" I have hardly drunk any wine after dinner the whole term. I'll chuck the whole thing. I must get a first in History, just to show them that I can. What do you think, Pepper, old man?' this to his dog who had just returned panting and excited from a heated chase

after an imaginary rabbit. Pepper with his tail said he thought it was an excellent idea. 'All right, that's settled.'

He went on, walking fast and revelling in the beautiful wintry day, and thinking of Blairavon and George. Suddenly he stopped, looked at his watch, and said,

'One o'clock! By jingo, and I have to be at the proctor's at two. It's good five miles to Magdalen Bridge, and, oh Lord, the senior proctor lives at Worcester. There ought to be a law preventing the proctor from living any further away from the middle of Oxford than Wadham or Merton. It will take me five minutes to find him when I get there too. Come on, Pepper, I am going to run for a bit.'

He reached Worcester at a few minutes after two, found the senior proctor's rooms, knocked at the door, and being bidden to enter, found to his amazement all the members of the Caledonian Club assembled.

‘Come in, Mr. Innes, I think you are now all here.’

The proctor looked at the men with a soft, sarcastic smile, and began :

‘I am well aware that it is almost without precedent to arraign undergraduates in a body like this, but I came to the conclusion that the circumstances justified it. I hardly know what to say to you, gentlemen. I suppose you know what happened last night, but possibly some of you may have a somewhat hazy notion, so I will refresh your memory. Yesterday was, I believe, St. Andrew’s Day; I was not aware of it myself.—Did you speak, Mr. Light-foot? No? I beg your pardon—for that reason the Caledonian Club, consisting entirely of Scotchmen, who are popularly supposed to have more than their fair share of common sense and hard-headedness, celebrate the occasion by one of the most disgusting orgies it certainly has ever been my misfortune to witness or

ever hear of. Perhaps you are unaware, gentlemen, that I stood for five minutes last night at the door of the drill-hall looking at your debauch.’ (Signs of uneasiness and wonder appeared on several faces at this announcement.) ‘Yes, I see you are surprised. I was anxious to go in and put a stop to the scene there and then, but the marshal, having regard for my personal safety, I presume, deterred me. I saw a number of presumably reasoning human beings in a state of howling intoxication, dancing amidst the *débris* of tables, bottles, and decanters, to the sound of that most detestable of all instruments, the bagpipes. Afterwards, I am informed by the police, this scene was re-enacted in front of the “Mitre.” The inspector of police tells me that, on trying to disperse you, he was promptly seized and made to perform what is known, I believe, as a Highland reel—a proceeding exceedingly derogatory to his dignity, and, considering his age and size,

injurious to his health. Nor is this all. Three members of Christ Church, two of them dressed in the national garb of Scotland, it is a matter of opinion whether the dress as ordinarily worn is decent or not, but there can be no doubt that when worn round the neck it is neither decent nor healthy, proceeded to the Broad playing on the pipes. One at least of these gentlemen has been twice heavily fined for playing that obnoxious instrument in the streets within the last year.'

It is a curious thing, but true, that the one thing an Oxford don will *not* stand, at any price, is the bagpipes. The reason is obscure. Whether it is that they really do not like the music (but that is surely impossible), or whether they think that it may rouse the excitable Scotchmen to deeds of daring and destruction, is unknown; the fact remains that they will fly from the bagpipes as from the devil himself. One has seen the worthy

master of a well-known college come suddenly round the corner on an itinerant bagpipe player who was just beginning to fill his bag ; on catching sight of him, the dear old gentleman literally gathered up his skirts and ran. But we have left the proctor speaking, as they say in the newspaper reports.

‘These three gentlemen, all playing different tunes,—if the noise that emanates from those instruments of torture can be honoured by the name of a tune.’ (Here Allan, not having heard of this part of the performance before, laughed audibly.) ‘You may laugh, Mr. Innes, but you may find to your cost that it is no laughing matter.—As I was saying, these gentlemen walked, or I should say lurched up and down underneath the Master of Balliol’s windows, and played their pipes. On being requested to desist by the police, one gentleman replied, “It’s all right, Bobby, we’re serenading the old buffer,

the Jowler likes music.”’ (At this point, Allan had to put his handkerchief into his mouth, and slowly got purple in the face as the proctor proceeded.) ‘Now this is not only a very disrespectful way of speaking of the Vice-Chancellor, but the so-called music has also caused him serious annoyance, so much so that he found himself quite unable to lecture on the “Republic” this morning.’ (A whisper at Allan’s ear of ‘Thank the Lord for that,’ made his symptoms positively dangerous.) ‘Nor is this all. On being removed by the police, they proceeded down the Corn-market, and at Carfax they broke all the lamps, and were just trying to knock into Christ Church, when they were secured by the police, and spent the rest of the night in the city prison.’

Here the proctor ceased, and surveyed the entire party once more with the same soft, sarcastic smile.

‘Well, gentlemen, have you anything to

say ?' On silence ensuing, he gave a short laugh, and said, ' I don't suppose you have. I need hardly say that such conduct is not what one expects from undergraduates of this university. In fact, if they all behaved as you did last night, it is needless to say that the university would either cease to exist, or that very much more stringent regulations would have to be brought into force. All I have to say is this—the Caledonian Club must at once be abolished.'

Here one or two murmurs were heard, and the proctor, smiling again, said to the president of the club,

‘ Did you speak, Mr. Lightfoot ?’

The president tried to say something, but, as has been said before, he was not a great orator, and Allan broke in,

‘ I think you ought to take into consideration, sir, that it was not all our fault, we had practically nothing to eat, and through a mistake we had nothing but

whisky to drink for an hour, and it would be very hard if Scotchmen were not allowed to honour their patron saint in a fitting manner.'

The proctor laughed in a hard way, and said,

'Well, Mr. Innes, I do not know anything about the catering part of your entertainment. I can only judge by results, and I quite agree with you that there seems to have been an inadequate supply of food and too profuse a quantity of liquor; but I presume that is a matter for the secretary—Mr. Menzies, I believe. As to your honouring your patron saint, I am sure no one would object to your doing so in a reasonable manner; but if all the Englishmen, Irishmen, and Welshmen in the university were to do the same, in the way that you did last night, I think you will easily see that university life would be impossible. I think there is nothing more to be said. I must ask all you

gentlemen to be in by nine for the rest of the term with the exception of Messrs. Kerr, Murray, and Logan. The Caledonian Club, for the present, at least, is abolished. I had intended to send you, Mr. Lightfoot, and Mr. Menzies, down for the rest of term, but, on hearing what Mr. Innes had to say, I have reconsidered that decision. As for you three gentlemen,'—turning to Kerr, Murray, and Logan,—‘I suppose it is unnecessary for me to deal with you. I presume you have already interviewed the Dean of Christ Church, and that you have met with your just reward. The fact of your having spent the night in the city prison will be enough for him.’

Kerr was understood to say that the dean was in town last night, and they were to see him at five.

‘In that case,’ said the proctor, ‘I must let you know that you must go down tomorrow morning, and not come into residence again for a year. This is only a

precaution on my part, in case the Dean does not see the matter in the proper light. Good afternoon, gentlemen; let me hope that I may not have to see you in my official capacity again.'

When they got into the quadrangle, Allan turned round and said,

'I think he has let us off uncommonly cheap.'

Logan took his arm, and said, with a gulp,

'I must enlist, Innes; the governor will never look at me again. Can't you do something for me, old chap?'

'I'm afraid not, Logan. I'm awfully sorry for you.'

Logan's father was a minister in the Established Church of Scotland, and Logan knew only too well that he would never overlook a thing of this sort.

On his way down to college, Allan met Winckworth. He took off his cap and said,

'I think you can depend on my reading

for a bit now, sir. I am gated for the rest of term.'

'I am very glad to hear it,' said Winckworth; at which Allan laughed, and went on to college.

CHAPTER III.

‘The first love which is infinite can be followed by no other which is like unto it.’

‘WELL, Allan, how did you get on last term?’ said his father to Allan the night after he came back from London. ‘I saw you beat Cambridge again on Wednesday.’

‘Oh, I got on pretty well, father, I had a bit of a kick-up with the proctor over the Caledonian dinner, and one or two men got sent down, but otherwise the term was uneventful enough. I think I made a pretty fair start in history.’

‘What happened about the Caledonian dinner?’

Allan told him, and his father said,

‘I am glad the club has been sup-

pressed ; it will only be for a time, I expect. That sort of thing is all very well, but it is out of date. We are becoming civilized, and now there is a certain amount of disgrace attaching to the fact of a man getting drunk, and I am very glad of it, although I am afraid the general morality of the rising generation is not by any means improving. The habit of drinking was still pretty well in vogue in my time, and even then it was not uncommon to see a man drink a couple of bottles of sherry with his lunch, but it had received its death-blow. What sort of a nation should we be now, I wonder, if we had kept up the port-drinking habits of our ancestors ? That was merely an outbreak of the brute part of our nature, and it is possible that it may occur again. I am almost afraid that among the young men of the present day it has begun again, though we oldsters are steadier than we used to be. I sincerely hope that the custom will never be-

come universal again. I am very glad that there is nobody here just now, Allan, because I want to talk to you about your future. There will be a house full of people next month for your coming of age, so I shan't have a moment to see you alone.'

'Oh, by the way, father, I want mother to ask two men of my year, whom I have not known till quite lately, I thought they were smugs, but I have found my mistake. Their names are Castello and Ingersoll, and there is another man, Prettyman, who went fishing with me down in Wales last spring. He is a schoolmaster now, and a very good sort. Castello will amuse you, I think; he doesn't say much, but what he does say is very much to the point.'

'My dear Allan, you may have absolutely anybody you like, the Emperor of Japan, if he will come; but hadn't you better arrange all that with your mother? I wanted to talk to you on another point. I want to make some sort of provision for

you, now that you are coming of age. In eighteen months you will be in London reading for the Bar, and your own master, and I want you to get accustomed to managing your own money affairs before then. Now I daresay you have one or two debts at Oxford; tell me what they are, and I will pay them, so that you can start perfectly fair. I propose to give you five hundred a year. I think that is enough, and as much as I can afford. You know pretty well what it costs to keep up this place, and so far I haven't been able to save a penny out of the money which comes from the Black Hawk, so I cannot well afford to give you any more.'

'My dear father, it is far too much, I could do quite well on less.'

'I think you had better have it, Allan, I never knew a young man yet who had more money than he could spend.'

'Very well, father, I suppose you know best.'

Allan told his father his debts, that is to say he told him some of them. There *is* nobody, never was anybody, and never will be anybody who ever told the exact truth about his college debts. It is the one point which George Washington himself would have lied on, if he ever had any college debts. Still it was a very respectable sum which Allan mentioned as the total of his debts.

‘I will give you a cheque to-morrow for the amount, but I don’t think you ought to make any more, Allan.’

‘Oh, I shan’t make any more. As a matter of fact, all those I did make were in my first year.’

‘With five hundred a year you ought to be able to live very well, and do practically what you please, except hunt on Franklin’s hacks. I wonder if he has got those two old greys still. No, he can’t have, they would be forty years old by now.’

‘I don’t know, father. I would not like

to guarantee that some of them aren't older. I wish I hadn't gone such a "mucker" my first year; one always does, I think, though. There was a man I knew at that new college, Keble, which they have built up by the parks, who told me that when, at the end of his first term, one of his uncles asked him what sort of place Oxford was in general and Keble in particular, he really did not know, and answered that "Oxford was a very nice place, and he had a sort of hazy idea that Keble was red."'

Richard laughed, and said,

'A parson's son, I suppose, being at Keble; they always seem to go the pace more than anyone else when they get out of leading-strings—I suppose it is because they are kept so tight at home. Let's go and see what mother and Amy are doing.'

They went arm-in-arm into the drawing-room. There existed between these two that complete openness and trust which is

so essential between father and son, and which, unfortunately, is so rarely seen.

‘What a long time you have been sitting over your wine, Dick.’

‘Yes, dear. I was talking to Allan about his coming of age.’

‘Just what Amy and I and Jack have been doing; Jack wants to have some school-friends, but it is impossible. I have told him that he must wait till he comes of age himself.’

‘It’s beastly rot, father,’ said Jack. ‘I told Colquhoun and Struthers that Allan was coming of age, and I would get mother to ask them.’

‘I don’t think it is possible, Jack dear. Look, Allan—here is the list of people I am going to ask to stay in the house. Oh, by the way, Dick, I am going to ask your two old aunts, Jane Innes and Mary Campbell. We haven’t seen them since we were in Edinburgh last, and that must be two years ago.’

‘My dear Kate, how awful! I am sure they would not care to be here among a lot of young people. Mary’s seventy-seven and Jane seventy-five.’

‘Perhaps they won’t come, Dick, but I think we ought to ask them.’

‘I devoutly hope they won’t come then,’ said Richard. ‘Aunt Mary is as blind as a bat, and deafer than any human being ever was yet, and Aunt Jane is about the most cantankerous old cat I ever saw in my life.’

‘Where on earth are you going to put all these people, mother?’

‘That’s the question, Allan. You and Jack, and Amy and Brunner, will have to sleep in the new wing. The rooms are good enough, the only thing is that they are not painted and furnished.’

‘Read out the list, Allan,’ said Richard.

‘George and Lady Anstruther, Wedderburn, Aunts Jane and Mary, Lady Grizel, General Ainslie, Prettyman, Ingersoll and

Costello, Lord and Lady Maginnis, Mr. and Mrs. Blair, and Mr. and Mrs. Bridgeman.' (These last were the Annie and Mary Low of former days, and their husbands.) 'That takes up all the bed-rooms, mother, but Jack's friends can come if we put two beds in the painting-room. They won't mind sleeping there, will they, Jack?'

'Not a bit!' said Jack, delighted. 'Colquhoun will sleep anywhere. I have seen him asleep during the Creed in chapel.'

'Very well, Jack; we'll ask them.'

'You're a brick, mother,' said Jack, as he gave her a boisterous kiss.

'We can dance in this drawing-room, mother, and in the library,' said Amy; 'and if we have all the doors off we can go straight through. I believe this front of the house was built solely for a dance.'

Before going to bed that night, Mrs. Innes said to Allan,

'I think you had better write to George, Allan dear, and persuade him to come. I

very much doubt if he will do so otherwise.'

'He must come, mother. I will write and tell him so. I will write now.'

So he wrote to George telling him that he would take no denial : that he meant to have a good time, and would not do so unless George came to help him, and so on. With the result that George promised to come at any rate for the day. Allan insisted that he should come at once ; the woods were swarming with woodcock, and they had not been shot yet, so he must come. So he came. He and Amy were at first very shy of each other, but gradually got over it, and were as good friends as ever.

Three days before Allan's birthday his great-aunts arrived, dressed in the fashion of fifty years ago. Jack had been out ferretting when they arrived, and did not know anything about it. So when he had dressed, and was coming into the drawing-

room, whistling before dinner, he saw two gaunt women sitting on either side of the fire. They were both sitting bolt upright, one of them apparently sleeping in this awkward position, the other was obviously deaf, as she did not move when Jack opened the door. He turned and fled. He saw his mother coming down the stairs, so he put his finger on his lips and said in a hoarse whisper,

‘I say, mother, there are two frightful old frumps in the drawing-room.’

‘Hush, Jack, they are your grand-aunts.’

‘Holy Moses!’ said Jack.

‘My dear boy, where *do* you get hold of those horribly vulgar expressions?’

‘Oh, that expression is quite up to date, mother!’

Mrs. Innes shuddered and said,

‘Don’t, Jack,’ but Jack was half-way up stairs to tell Allan and George, and five minutes afterwards all three came down into the drawing-room.

Mrs. Innes said to Allan and Jack, aside,

‘ You must kiss them.’

Jack said,

‘ I am not taking any, thank you, mother.’

‘ This is my eldest son Allan,’ screamed Mrs. Innes at Miss Mary.

‘ That’s no use,’ said her sister, ‘ she’s much deafer than that.’

She put her mouth to her sister’s ear and bellowed,

‘ Dick’s eldest son.’

The unfortunate old lady seemed to have had some notion that some one had spoken, but when Allan kissed her she smiled, she was a dear, good-natured old creature really, and said,

‘ Oh, yes, Dick’s eldest son: how are you, my dear, why didn’t you tell me, Jane, that he was here?’

Mrs. Campbell cast a look of withering contempt at her, and yelled again,

‘Sir George Anstruther, Mary.’

Miss Innes put out her face to be kissed, so George kissed her, whereupon she muttered,

‘Dear me, Jane said he was only sixteen or thereabouts, and he has a heavy moustache—very extraordinary!’

‘It isn’t Jack,’ again screamed her sister. ‘It’s Sir George Anstruther. *This* is Jack.’ (At this point Mrs. Campbell had got so purple in the face with exertion that Allan thought she would have a fit.)

On Jack kissing her, Miss Innes appeared bewildered, and said again half-aloud,

‘Three of them, Jane said there were only two, but I suppose she was wrong, but sometimes I don’t hear very well. Well—well, I suppose it’s all right;’ and she sighed in a hopeless sort of manner.

At dinner the two sisters had to sit beside one another, as Miss Innes could not manage her knife and fork very well at times, and was apt to make furtive dabs at

the tablecloth in search of food. Mrs. Campbell was in consequence a sort of director-general of provisions for her.

‘Soup, Mary,’ cried Mrs. Campbell.

‘No, thank you.’

‘Oh, yes, she will. What do you call that black man of yours, Dick? Francis? Francis, bring that soup back again. Now, Mary, eat your soup.’

Miss Innes, having been addressed again, thought that some solid food had been placed in front of her, so she made several futile attempts to eat her soup with a fork before Mrs. Campbell, who was talking to Mrs. Innes, looked at her sister again.

Miss Innes was just laying down her fork with a sigh of resignation, when Mrs. Campbell exclaimed,

‘Bless the woman, she’s trying to eat soup with a fork again. It’s soup, sooup, not fish, Mary.’

‘No, thank you,’ answered the poor woman, calmly.

Mrs. Campbell lost her temper, and said to Francis,

‘ Here, take it away.’

At this point Jack left the room with a hurried step, and after some very suspicious sounds had been issuing from the back of the dining-room door, for some five minutes, he came back very red in the face, and with his eyes still watering, and said that he had been to fetch a handkerchief.

After this, dinner passed off without any further mishap, with the exception that poor Miss Innes, being for an instant left alone without a helping hand, tried to walk into the fire, under the impression that she was going out at the door.

On the following day all the other guests arrived, and a merry party they made.

Allan went to meet the old general at the station as usual.

‘ This is uncommonly kind of you, Allan. I have had a touch of gout, and I feel crusty, and I can vent my bad temper on

you. Well, how are you, my lad? You look as well as it is possible for anyone to look. *You* don't look as if you were pining away. Not fallen in love yet, eh?'

Allan laughed.

'Not yet, general;' and, as he said it, the vision of the girl on the bridge in Wales came into his mind, and he blushed.

The general looked at him, and said,

'Humph! I'm not so sure about that, either.'

'You are wrong there, general; at any rate, I have never spoken to any girl I would care to marry, yet;' which was strictly true, and it deceived the general completely, who said,

'Glad to hear it, my boy. You are too young to fall in love; you had better defer that sweet pain as long as possible.'

'Lord Maginnis is here, general.'

The general smiled, and said,

'Well, I suppose I must bear up under the affliction.'

‘He’s going the day after to-morrow, though.’

‘Under those circumstances, I shall stay for a week. By gad! my boy, this frosty air in the country makes one feel alive again. I don’t care if Maginnis is here. I am going to enjoy myself.’

The next day was Allan’s twenty-first birthday, and in the evening there was a great dinner, and after Allan had responded to the toast of his health, the general jumped up and made as though he would speak. The general was always ready to speak, but he was not a good speaker. In fact, he was a very bad speaker. His speeches lacked coherence and, as a rule, meaning. He said,

‘I know this is very irregular, and all that, and you must excuse me, Kate, but I must say a few words, and I am going to say them. It’s all right, Maginnis, you needn’t prick up your ears, I am not going to talk politics in order to give you a

chance of getting me into a corner. I want you all to drink a toast with me, and it is more or less an exculpation for a very foolish remark I made some thirty years ago in this very room. I was home on leave from India, and I was staying with our host's father, a week after he left for Australia, and even then I was apt to be a little choleric. You needn't smile, Wedderburn; go and try forty years in India, and you will find that your temper may get short too. Well, on that occasion I was rash enough to remark that our host to-night would go to the devil—that is—well—er—yes, that he would go to the devil; don't be shocked, ladies. If you will look at our host to-night and around you, you will say that that prognostication has turned out incorrect. I give you our host and hostess.' You may be sure it was drunk with enthusiasm, but when the general found himself standing alone, waving his glass, and singing a verse of

‘He’s a jolly good fellow,’ he stopped suddenly and sat down, muttering quite loud enough to be heard, ‘Here am I making a d—d fool of myself as usual;’ then suddenly remembering that he was not alone in India, ‘By gad, Kate, I am very sorry—confounded bad habit of mine—comes of being so long alone in India. I really am not fit for the society of ladies.’

Mrs. Innes smiled kindly at him, and putting her soft white hand on his huge weather-beaten paw, said in a low voice,

‘I wish all my acquaintance were as fit for it as you, general.’

The general turned and kissed her, whereupon he was again covered with confusion, and everybody laughed at him good-naturedly. Soon after, Richard said,

‘Now you young people had better go and get yourselves ready for the dance.’

When they were gone, Richard carried his glass round to the general’s end of the table. Said the general,

‘ It’s a terrible pity you won’t let Allan go into the Army, Dick. It’s the only profession for a gentleman, but I suppose it is not to be. Let me congratulate you on him, at any rate. Any father ought to be proud of him.’

‘ It is very kind of you to say so, general. I have nothing to complain of in Allan. The only thing that I am afraid of is that he may become too idle. He is so full of high spirits and good health that he finds it very hard to do any serious work.’

‘ What the devil do you expect from a young man, Dick? That’s why I hate this infernal system of examination prevalent now-a-days. Boys spend their time in cramming their heads with a lot of confounded nonsense, as I have said before, which is only learnt to be forgotten. They ruin their health in many cases by it, before they go into the Army or the Civil Service. I like to see a young fellow enjoying himself. Why should he work?’

Will he make any better landlord because he can write Greek iambs? Believe me, Dick, there is a great deal of absolute nonsense talked about education now-a-days. If I had my way, I would make the test examination for the officers in the Army consist every bit as much of athletic excellence, power of endurance, and physical excellence generally, as of mere book learning. I think you will allow that we would have a far finer lot of men as officers, and fewer of those simpering little dandies with eyeglasses, who look as though they were made for a lady's boudoir instead of for a battle-field, by—gad. Not that I would abolish the mental training, in a modified degree, altogether, because, taken two men of equal physique, the man with brains is worth a great deal more than the man who is a mere mechanical Hercules. I seem to have got somewhat mixed, Dick, but I daresay you will understand what I mean.'

‘I understand you perfectly, general, and I partially agree with you, but I don’t believe in any man being idle—but come, I think we had better go into the other room.’

The dance was nearly over. Amy and George were sitting in a recess in the inner drawing-room, completely shut off from the rest of the room, during the last dance but one. They were very silent. They were both on the brink of a precipice, and they knew it, and yet, curiously enough, had not much fear as to falling over. Excitement and not fear was the feeling uppermost, the excitement which comes to the young only when they know that they are going to have some great enjoyment, and are not quite sure what form it is going to take.

After sitting silent for some minutes, George turned so as almost to face Amy, and said very softly,

‘Have you ever thought over what I asked you last summer, Amy?’

‘Often, George.’

‘Do you think you can change your mind?’

Amy did not answer, and George took her hands, which resisted not, and drawing her gently towards himself, bent down and kissed her on the forehead.

‘Do you think that you can love me, Amy dear?’

‘I have loved you all the time, George, only I did not know it until after you had asked me.’

‘My darling!’

Time is nothing to the lover, except his mistress be late. They must have been sitting nearly an hour in this recess, telling each other the tale which has been told since the world began, and which never grows old nor loses its sweetness. George rose and said,

‘Come, my love. Everyone has gone

away. I must go and tell your father.'

Allan and his father and mother were standing in front of the fire, and the others were in the library eating a second or a third supper, and they could hear the general saying,

'Haven't done this for thirty years, by gad. I shall be in bed for a month after this.'

George and Amy came up to Richard, and George said,

'I have asked Amy to be my wife, Mr. Innes, and she has consented.'

'My dear George, I am glad to give her to you, there is no one to whom I would rather see her married than to you.'

Mrs. Innes kissed Amy tenderly, and said,

'Oh, my dear, I *am* so glad.'

Allan merely clasped George's hand, and he understood more by that than if he had made the most eloquent speech in the world. The others all flocked in, in a

body, and overwhelmed George and Amy with congratulations.

The general avowed his intention of staying up all night to celebrate the occasion, but he was dissuaded by Allan who reminded him of his gout, whereupon the general turned on him and said,

‘ Now I call that deuced unkind of you, Allan. Here have I been eating, and drinking champagne, and even making an ass of myself in a set of Lancers, and behaving generally like any other young lunatic, all for your benefit, and then you come and tell me I am a gouty old fogey and had better go to bed. Well, I suppose it’s the best place for me. If I am ill to-morrow, I will make you come and read to me all day. As for you, sir,’ turning to George, ‘ I consider you an uncommonly lucky young man,’ (so apparently did Wedderburn and Ingersoll, only they did not say so,) ‘ though I daresay you flatter yourself you have got no more

than your deserts. All young men are conceited : but I am getting cantankerous and had better go to bed.'

George laughed as he shook hands with the general, and said,

' I am not quite so bad as that, general.'

Allan's birthday fell on a Friday, which was in reality the first day of the Oxford term, but he had got leave to stay down till Monday morning.

It was the custom at Blairavon for the minister to come up to lunch after morning service on Sundays, and stay till late in the afternoon. Allan had to drive into Ayr in order to catch the English mail, so at five o'clock he came into the drawing-room to say good-bye. On coming to Miss Innes, he bellowed out,

' Good-bye, Aunt Mary.'

' Eh ?'

' Good-bye, I am going up to Oxford.'

' Oh, good-bye, Mr. Macfarlane, thank you so much for your excellent sermon

this morning, I have not heard such a good one for many years.'

This was probably true, as she certainly had not heard one at all for nearly twenty years.

'It isn't Mr. Macfarlane, it's Allan,' shrieked Allan.

'Eh? No. I shan't be here next Sunday.'

'Come on, Allan, you will be late,' called Richard from the hall; so Allan left and never saw the old lady again, as she died in the end of the following March, and her sister following her in a few weeks, they disappear from this story for ever.

A week after Allan had gone up, he had a letter from his mother to say that Francis had gone back to India. That 'he had evidently been making love to Jane the pretty housemaid for a very long time, and had given her a great many presents which she had accepted, and Francis,

thinking that his advances were being received with favour, had proposed, and on being unhesitatingly refused had taken it very much to heart, and, announcing his intention of going to be killed in the war in Egypt, had started the previous day from Glasgow. Jane had behaved very badly and was dismissed,' etc., etc.

CHAPTER IV.

‘*Sic transit gloria mundi.*’

GEORGE and Amy were married in the following September, and Allan went up for his last year at Oxford. He had read really hard and well, and being possessed of a fair amount of brains, and having got a thorough grip of his subject, was feeling on rather good terms with himself. It certainly did him a great deal of credit that he had managed to throw off successfully all his old habits of wasting time, and devoting his attention solely to amusement and athletics. He was not industrious by nature, and, as there was no shadow of a prospect of his ever having to make his own living, his application was praise-

worthy. It is so very easy *not* to work at Oxford, even for the man whose very existence depends on his exertions and success in the schools, and in consequence all the more credit is due to Allan for his real hard work, though I am afraid he did it 'just to show he could,' as he himself had said.

At the end of term Winckworth, who was his history tutor, said to him,

'I think you have fully made up for your two first years' idleness, Innes, by your work in the last year. I must say that I am glad that all the men with whom you associated when you first came up have gone down, and left you free to work.'

'Yes, sir, one can only learn by experience, and I must say that, if I had my time in Oxford over again, I would not choose those sort of men for my friends. I suppose I was flattered by the attention of men like Thomas, when I was a freshman; but now I quite agree with you such

men as Castello and Ingersoll are much better fellows. What do you think of my chance in the schools, sir ?'

'Well, Innes, if you go on as you have been doing till June, I do not see that there is any chance of your not getting a first, that is to say, if you keep your head in the schools. I am very pleased with the way you have been going on, because it isn't easy for a man who has the position you have as captain* of the 'Varsity at football to read regularly, but I daresay that your experience in this term last year over the Caledonian dinner gave you a lesson.'

'Yes, sir ; but I think I would rather be captain of the 'Varsity than get a first.'

'I daresay you would, Innes, now ; but possibly your ideas on that subject may change a few years hence.'

'Well, good-bye, sir. I am going down

* My friend Mr. A. G. G. A. must pardon me for making Allan captain of Oxford in a year rendered memorable by his own brilliant presidency.

to-morrow morning, and the match is on Wednesday.'

'Good-bye, Innes. I hope you'll win.'

'Thank you, sir, we ought to.'

The Rectory Field, Blackheath, the scene of many a fierce struggle between the two universities at football. A beautiful, mild, grey day in December. Around the ropes an eager and anxious throng, composed chiefly of young men, are waiting in a state of suppressed excitement. It is just on the stroke of three, the time for the match to begin. In a few minutes the two fifteens come out of the pavilion—and as Allan stepped into the field carrying the ball, a perfect yell of 'Oxford!' arose from the Oxford partisans, to be repeated a moment after, only from other throats shouting another name, when the Cambridge team appeared. Then came a confused babble of voices, as the onlookers recognized their friends among the players, and pointed

them out to non-university men who did not know them. Then came a deep silence. Allan had said to himself that day that he was the proudest man in England, and I daresay he was.

It is curious to mark the dead hush that comes over a crowd before a game is started. If any of my readers have been at Lord's when any great match, say England *v.* Australia, is being decided, they will know what is meant. Before the bowler starts to bowl, at a critical stage of the match, one can almost hear one's heart beat; if the ball passes into the wicket-keeper's hands untouched, a vast sigh is heard, and then the same solemn silence follows till the next ball is bowled. If a wicket fall, what a scream of delight comes from the partisans of the fielding side; and if the ball be cracked to the boundary, a yell of joy issues from the throats of the friends of the batting side. Just such a hush as has been described fell upon the

excited spectators on the Rectory Field on that December day in 1884. Allan kicked off, and, directly the ball was kicked, a noise began which lasted during the whole game, only ceasing partially for a few minutes during the interval at half-time. It would be too much to follow all the intricacies of a game at Rugby football. As the game went on, the partisans of Oxford became more and more elated, and the partisans of Cambridge became equally depressed, till, at the end of the game, Oxford had won an overwhelming victory. On his way back to the pavilion, Allan was the recipient of many flattering remarks from his friends, and other members of the crowd who had no earthly interest in either university, but who thought it the right thing to take a side on the occasion. He pushed his way through the throng till he reached the pavilion, and when he got inside and was calling for hot water, he heard a scuffle at

the door and the sound of a voice which he had a vague idea of having heard before.

‘But I *vill* see him; he is my frent. Vat you do, canaille? Here! Allin!’

‘Now, look ’ere, Mr. Frenchman, my orders is that no one goes in to this ’ere pavilion ’cept ’e’s a member or a reporter. Now they don’t ’ave Frenchmen in the Blackheath Club, and I never ’ear tell as ’ow they reports the matches in the French papers; so you don’t get in.’

At this moment Allan appeared at the door, and De Rochefoucauld—for he it was—shouted,

‘Mon Dieu, dere ’e is!’ and Allan said,
‘You can let him in, policeman.’

De Rochefoucauld rushed in, and embraced Allan in front of all the men in the pavilion, at which they laughed; then he turned round and shook his fist at the policeman, at which he grinned. De Rochefoucauld took hold of Allan by the shoulders, and held him at arm’s length.

‘Hein, mon petit ami. How vas it? Eh? I vas in London zis morning wiz Bayard, and I see in ze paper “Oxford and Cambridge,” and then some names, and one vas Allin Innes, and I said to Bayard, “Zat is my leetle frent of the ship. Come and see him play sports :” but Bayard said he not vant to see ze English young men fight in ze mud, and so I have com’ alone, and I ’ave shout “Oxford” and “Allin” till I am ’oarse,—which was perfectly true—‘and I com’ to see and ask you vich as von.’

‘We won easily, Monsieur de Rochefoucauld.’

‘Ah, I knew you would vin, but vat matters it who vins. You have ze fight and la gloire. Ah, “vive le football!” You must com’ and dine wiz me and Bayard to-night.’

Allan said that he could not, as he and five other men were going to dine together at the Isthmian Club.

‘ Ah, that matters not ; bring zem all to dine at ze Grand Hotel wiz me and Bayard. Ve go to Paris to-morrow, and shall not see you again. I go now to order special dinner. Yes?’

So they went and had a royal time ; the other men voting Allan’s friends ‘ regular beauties.’

‘ By Jove !’ said one, ‘ that’s the best dinner I ever ate in my life. I must say that we English are a long way behind the Parisians in our ideas of food and drink.’

On the next day, Allan went to stay with Lady Grizel at her house in Rutland Gate, after having made De Rochefoucauld and Bayard promise to come and stay with him at Blairavon the next time they were in England.

‘ I have no one in the house, my dear,’ said Lady Grizel, ‘ because I wanted to have you to myself for these few days which you have spared to me.’

‘ I would stay longer, Lady Grizel, only

I promised George and Amy to go to Ardarrochar for a week, and mother will want me at Blairavon after that. I must go home on Monday night.'

'Very well, dear, I must make the most of you, while you are here.'

'You are far too kind to me, Lady Grizel. I am afraid you will spoil me utterly.'

'I don't think so, Allan. I do wish I could make you my heir, dear. But it is impossible. Somerton's cousin is going to marry too, soon. You mustn't mind my talking to you like this, dear. You know by this time that I regard you just as if you were my own son.'

'I daresay I shall be much better without the money, Lady Grizel. I shall have quite enough.'

On the Sunday following, Allan asked Lady Grizel to go to Westminster Abbey, as he had never been to service there in his life. They went. After service, it being a bright, clear day, Allan proposed

that they should walk back to Rutland Gate: so Lady Grizel dismissed the carriage and they walked back.

Allan was apt, as possibly you may have discovered, to talk a little wildly at times. Most of what he said had, as a rule, a solid basis of common sense, though it may have been somewhat crudely expressed. He was silent for a time; but when they had got well over Westminster Bridge, he said,

‘I think that our religion is only possible in a place like that, and with beautiful music. I think that the music, in fact, is the only thing that has any influence upon me—a good sermon impresses one for the time, but one can’t remember it, whereas one *can* carry away music. I think there is nothing more inconceivably dreary than the service we have at Blairavon. Long-winded, monotonous prayers, an equally long-winded and uninteresting sermon, and then those awful psalms sung through

the nose, as only the Scotch peasants can sing through the nose. Many of the psalms are beautiful enough in themselves, only they are spoilt by that horrible droning. Our religion is a terrible farce, after all. I thoroughly agree with Rousseau when he calls it "organized hypocrisy." Look at the City of Glasgow bank directors. I don't believe in public worship. How many of all those people in the Abbey came to worship God, I wonder? The women came to show their bonnets, and the men to look at the women ;' and then, as though he were merely expressing a thought aloud, he murmured,

' Oh, we too as well can look
Whited thought and cleanly life
As the priest, above his book
Leering at his neighbour's wife.'

' My dear Allan, what *are* you talking about? I hope you are not referring to me. I am perfectly well aware that I am not any better than my neighbours, but I hope you are not coupling me with your-

self in your quotation. My dear boy, you set far too high a standard for us poor mortals.'

'No, I don't, Lady Grizel. I beg your pardon: that is rude. I mean I don't intend to. But public worship always annoys me. I feel that I am myself a part of the whole farce. That's why I say that music is the only thing that has any effect upon me in church. You *must* have something to lift you out of yourself. In church there are hundreds of things to take one's attention off what is going on. I am afraid I express myself very coarsely. In private one can rivet one's attention on the subject, and really show one's reverence to God.'

'I quite agree with you, Allan dear, that public worship isn't much good for a great many people, but it is the outward emblem of our faith, and is necessary for us weaker vessels, at least so we are told. But still I don't think that you ought to make such

sweeping assertions. Allan, the longer you can keep the simple faith of your fathers the happier you will be. Public worship is supposed to be the bond which knits those of our faith together, and without such a bond we are told the whole fabric would collapse. I hope, dear, that although you find public worship irksome and contrary to your views of what ought to be, you are not slipping into scepticism in any way. I, for my part, am content to accept, with certain mental reservations, the faith of my ancestors. It is a very simple faith, and, to my mind, needlessly encompassed by all kinds of forms and observances, which cramp it rather than allow it free scope. I know that the tendency of the age is to examine the whole matter from a scientific point of view, and I think it is a great pity. I cannot understand why people trouble themselves about it, because they can never get any further in the matter. Nobody can

ever know the truth, and the whole question merely resolves itself into an argument towards probabilities. It seems to me to be an entirely unnecessary waste of time, brains, and labour. No effort of science can ever pierce the veil which hangs before the origin of the world. Science may solve the problem of the origin of life to its own complete satisfaction, but there is something before that, and again something before *that*, and so on for ever and ever. The contemplation of infinity is not a mental exercise which can bear much fruit.'

'I don't, for a moment, Lady Grizel, intend to take up the standpoint of a lot of men in Oxford, who boldly confess themselves atheists, sceptics, unbelievers, it doesn't matter much what you call them, because they are of no account, the majority of whom have never thought of the matter seriously for five minutes. All I contend is, at present at any rate, that our system of worship is all wrong. I know

perfectly well that there must be some recognised form for what you call frail mortals. Something tangible which one can appeal to. It is like constitutional monarchy, an excellent puppet useless and expensive in itself, and yet at the same time most necessary. I think it ought to be made as beautiful as possible, and not dreary and dismal as it is in so many places. I have curious notions on the subject, Lady Grizel, and at present they have taken no concrete form.—Here we are at the house.’

Allan was down to breakfast before Lady Grizel on Monday morning, and found a letter from his father awaiting him. He picked it up and said to himself, ‘That’s curious! I wonder why father has written to me when he knew I was coming home to-night?’ He put it down on the table again, and picked up the *Standard*, and read the sporting news of the previous Saturday, and glanced over the rest of the

paper saying, ‘H’m, that’ll keep till after breakfast.’

He took up his father’s letter and opened it and began to read, and as he read his face became pale, and finally he dropped it with a groan, just as Lady Grizel came into breakfast.

‘My dear boy, what is the matter?’

Allan did not answer, but merely pointed to the letter, which she picked up and read thus:—

‘MY DEAR ALLAN,—I should have telegraphed to you to-day, only, as you know, the telegraph-office is not open here on Sunday. I received a letter from Mr. Reid this morning, which tells me in as plain words as possible that the Black Hawk Company has stopped payment. It is no use mincing matters. It means this, that for the present, at least, I am ruined. I must say I cannot understand why Reid has given me no intimation of this previ-

ously, because it is practically impossible that he could not have seen signs of the mine giving out. His letter simply states the bare fact. I must, of course, immediately go out to Australia to investigate the matter. I think you had better come home at once, as arrangements will have to be made about your affairs without delay.—Your affectionate father.'

'Oh, my poor boy, you must come and live with me. I have saved enough money to make a deed of gift to you, to provide you with a comfortable income for life. You must stay at Oxford, Allan, and let me pay your debts. Oh, Allan, how dreadfully sorry I am for you!' and Lady Grizel stroked his bowed head as she spoke. 'Come, dear, you must have some breakfast.'

Allan got up looking very white, and said,

'I don't think I care for any breakfast,

Lady Grizel. I must go home. After all, it is nothing. It is only a loss of money. I can make my own way, but I could kill myself when I think on those two wasted years at Oxford. No, Lady Grizel, I shall not go back there. I will go out to Australia with my father, and start life there again, as he did.'

'You will be lost there. Australia is a thing of the past for fortune-making; besides, it is a confession of weakness to leave England.'

'But what else can I do, Lady Grizel? Positively the only thing open to me is to be ordained, and I *will not* do that.'

Lady Grizel did not argue the point with him. Allan went out after breakfast, saying to Lady Grizel,

'I am going for a long walk. You must not think me rude—but I want to think. I shall go by the 10.30 from Euston.'

'Don't do anything rash, dear.'

Allan smiled a wintry smile, and said,
‘ I am not likely to do anything of that sort, Lady Grizel.’

He went along past Knightsbridge, past Hyde Park Corner into Piccadilly, all along Piccadilly, and then, not knowing where he was going, through the streets which are now Shaftesbury Avenue, until he suddenly discovered that he was in a part of London which he did not know, and, moreover, his ears were assailed by sounds to which he was not accustomed, and his nose was regaled by some very curious and strange odours. He stopped and looked for a policeman, and, finding none, he picked his way among the broken pots, decaying vegetables, squalling children, and slatternly women, as well as he could, and was the object of many remarks otherwise than complimentary from the few sodden-looking men who were leaning against their door-posts, smoking. As he was going to ask the way politely, he

found that he was practically surrounded by as evil-looking a crew of men and women as one could well wish to see. Two or three boys of sixteen or seventeen with aged, crime-stamped faces, came running up.

‘ ‘Ere’s a barney, boys,’ said one.—‘ Oi guess ‘e’s muggy,’ said another.—‘ Moi oyes, ain’t ‘e a gorger,’ said the first speaker. ‘ Look at ‘is wipe.’

As he said it, he made an attempt to snatch Allan’s handkerchief, an attempt which was frustrated by a girl who intervened. Though she could not have been more than eighteen, her face was haggard and drawn, and her eyes, bereft of the brilliance and clearness of youth, had a weary look ; she still had the remains of great personal beauty. She began to fawn upon Allan, and even took him by the lappel of his coat and whispered into his ear, when she was brushed aside by a huge, red-faced virago, who said,

‘You ’old yer jaw, Mariar, ’e don’t want none o’ you; don’t yer see ’e’s got the blues? Now then, my dookie, tip us a bit o’ the blunt, will yer? Make it a bull. S’help me, I ain’t ’ad a good slap-up drunk for four days.’

At this point a villainous-looking Hercules, with a terrible black eye and a patch across his nose, which was inflamed to a fearful extent with drink, elbowed his way through the crowd, and, tossing the woman aside with an oath, said,

‘Give a cove a chawnce, can’t yer?’ Then to Allan, ‘Now then, guv’ner, wot yer goin’ to stand?’

Allan was in a state of complete bewilderment; he had managed to get his back up against the wall of a house, and he knew by this time that he was in one of those low parts of London which he had read of, but had never seen. He was utterly at a loss what to do. He was just going to offer them money if they would

show him the way out into the civilized streets again, when a young man on the outskirts of the crowd cried,

‘ ‘Ell and Tommy, ‘ere’s the coppers.’

In an instant, men, women, and children melted away like a dream, and the street resumed the aspect it had worn on Allan’s entrance. The men were leaning against their doors again. The women returned to their work and their cursing. Allan walked up to the two policemen and asked the way.

‘ What on earth do you mean by coming in here, sir?’ said one.

Allan said that he had wandered there without knowing it.

‘ Well, you can consider yourself uncommon lucky to come out with a whole skin. Let me advise you to be a little more careful in future. Why, I wouldn’t come in ‘ere without my mate for five ‘undred pounds in the day-time even, and as for the night—well, I don’t suppose I should ever come out again, specially if I

had any money or joolery on me like you.'

They put Allan into Holborn, and he found his way back to Rutland Gate.

'Don't do anything without first seeing me, Allan,' Lady Grizel said to him as he drove away to catch the train.

'I will come and see you before I go out to Australia,' said Allan. A wave of the hand, and he was gone.

Allan took a third-class ticket to Scotland, and in company with a garrulous bagman and a drunken sailor made his way north. Sleep was impossible. The wheels seemed to din the one word 'Ruin' into his brain. It was with a sigh of relief that he got out, in the raw morning of December 22nd, at Carlisle to change into the Ayr train. He found Jack waiting for him at the station at home, looking very pale and frightened.

'Oh, Allan, father is very ill, he had a sort of fit last night after dinner, and now he's delirious.'

Mrs. Innes kissed Allan in silence when he came in, and when they were going upstairs she said,

‘He is very ill, dear.’

‘I must see him, mother.’

He went up to his father’s room, and when he saw the wide open, rolling, soulless eyes, he put his head down on the bed and wept.

Allan asked the doctor what was the matter precisely with his father. The doctor tried to assume an air of confidence which he was far from feeling, and said,

‘Well, my dear young sir, I cannot give you any specific name for the disease. We saw a great deal of this sort of thing after the failure of the City of Glasgow bank. It arises from some great mental shock. Your mother tells me that your father received some very bad news about money matters the day before yesterday. But time, sir, time will put it all right—I

hope. He must be kept in perfect quiet, and in a week or so I hope we shall see a change for the better. I shall come down every morning from Glasgow until any danger there may be is over. Your local doctor seems an able man. Good-bye, sir, good-bye.'

Allan saw very plainly that, although the doctor tried to encourage him, he really was very anxious about his father. Four long, anxious days passed, and on the evening of the fifth after the doctor had left, and while Allan was in the room, his father awoke from a restless troubled doze, and said in a feeble voice,

'Is that you, Allan?'

Allan, with a voice of ill-concealed delight, answered,

'Yes, father, don't talk. You are not very well, and the doctor says you must have rest.'

'Rest, ah, yes, rest; something happened—and I can't remember what it is—my

head seems weak.' Then, with a groan, he said, ' Ah, I remember——'

Those were the last words he ever spoke. From that moment he became weaker and weaker, and on the morning of the 20th he died.

Grief, deep, inassuageable grief reigned over the house which one short week before had known little else but peace and happiness for nearly ten years.

Allan went about making arrangements for the funeral with a dull, aching pain at his heart, that he then thought would remain there for ever.

On the last day of the old year, Richard Innes was laid to rest in the tomb of his ancestors. The ground was covered to the depth of a foot with snow, but, notwithstanding that, members of all the county families from far and near came to do honour to the man who in so few years had completely won their respect and admiration. They all knew, for ill news flies

apace, that they were not only looking on death, but that in all probability destitution, or something very like it, was behind.

The guests had gone, with the exception of General Ainslie, who was staying on to help and advise Allan what to do. Late in the afternoon of the funeral, Allan was sitting in the library before the fire with Reid's letter lying open in his hand. He then saw it for the first time. It was very short. It ran thus :

‘DEAR DICK,

‘It is no use trying to break the matter gently. It comes to this. The Black Hawk has run dry. I have suspended payment. I would have telegraphed, but couldn't explain properly. There is nothing to be done. I have done my best for you. Condolence is useless.

‘Yours ever,

‘HARRY REID.’

As Allan was sitting looking at the

letter, the general came in and laid his hand on Allan's shoulder.

'Allan, my poor boy, I am terribly sorry for you. But you are young, and must make your way. I have just been talking to your mother, and we have come to the conclusion you ought to finish your Oxford career, and either take orders, or try to get some secretaryship or other. It would be a complete waste of money if you did not take your degree, and there are heaps of things in which an Oxford degree will be of great service to you.'

'But, general, have you read this?'

'No, my boy, I haven't; but your mother told me its contents. It means that, with the exception of what your father may have in the bank to his current account, you have nothing but Blairavon.'

'How am I to continue at Oxford, general? My allowance ought to come on the 1st of January, and of course I haven't a cent.'

‘Oh, I daresay we shall manage that, Allan; it is only for two terms more, you see.’

Allan thought of the two hundred pounds’ worth of debts or so he had still to pay off, and wondered who would manage that.

‘I think I ought to go into business, general.’

‘My boy, you are too old to start business now. Jack tells me that he is quite willing to go into a bank as soon as he can; but you must go back to Oxford.’

Allan said that he would think about it, that he could not decide at once.

‘And then there is another thing, Allan—this house must be advertised at once to be let. I don’t suppose that you will get more than about three hundred and fifty pounds a-year for it, because it is enormous, and there is no shooting about it in comparison to its size, and your mother must have means to live upon at once.’

Allan agreed, and it was finally settled that Mrs. Innes should live in Edinburgh, Jack with her, and that Blairavon should be let as soon as possible.

On the following morning Allan had a letter from Lady Grizel, asking him—nay, imploring him to go back to Oxford, and to allow her to pay his expenses; and that, if he did not care to take the money, to regard it as a loan to be paid back whenever he chose. Allan thought long over this, and came to the conclusion that, after all the kindness which Lady Grizel had shown him, it would be ungrateful in him not to accede to this request; so at lunch he informed the general that he was going back to Oxford.

‘That’s right, Allan; it is much the best thing you can do, and you will never be sorry for it.’

A week after the house had been advertised, a letter came from a firm of solicitors in London, saying that Blairavon

had been taken by a client of theirs on the recommendation of Lady Somerton, at the rent asked, viz., three hundred and fifty pounds per annum. The general was quite elated over this.

‘Now we have things straight at once; this is very fortunate. You may go back to Oxford without any misgivings as to your mother, Allan.’

Allan, in a dull way, said he supposed it was very lucky, and the general said,

‘Come, Allan, it is no use moping, my lad. Grief and hardship come to all of us in our time, and you mustn’t give way to it; the only thing to do is to face all your troubles like a man.’

‘Yes, I know you are right, general, but I simply can’t get over the awful suddenness of his death, and I am constantly tormented by remorse at having so utterly wasted my time at Oxford.’

‘Pooh, nonsense, my dear boy, it is no use crying over spilt milk; that’s all over,

and you can't recall it, so what's the use of bothering about it. All you can do now is to start fair and make up for it.'

'Yes, general, I think that's the only thing to be done. I have been thinking, though, that I ought to make some effort to set inquiries going in Australia about the Black Hawk. It is very curious that the mine should have collapsed all of a sudden like that without any warning.'

'I strongly suspect that that man Reid had a good deal to do with it; a slippery customer I expect, eh?'

'My dear general, Reid a slippery customer! Why, he would have done anything for my father.'

'Hum—ha—yes. I am inclined to look shyly on those extremely accommodating persons. However, you may be quite sure that he has made off with all the available money.'

'But, then, there's the mine itself,' said Allan.

‘ Yes, but I think that your father was unwise enough to give this man a power of attorney, and consequently he can have sold the mine, or done anything he pleased with it.’

‘ So he could,’ said Allan ; and for the first time a vague suspicion came over him that Reid might have deceived them.

He banished it from his mind at once as impossible ; and then, when he remembered that his mother had never cared for Reid, he could not keep the thought out of his head, though he hated himself for it all the time. He, however, made up his mind to go to Australia some day, and investigate matters carefully. That ‘ some day ’ is a very indefinite matter, and it is the time to which most things are relegated. Allan found that there was practically nothing in the bank to his father’s current account ; enough to pay the expenses of the funeral and for his mother’s removal to Edinburgh, whence, having seen

her settled in a small house in the west-end, he went at the end of January, with a heavy heart, back to Oxford once more.

CHAPTER V.

‘ Behold, we know not anything ;
I can but trust that good shall fall
At last—far off—at last, to all,
And every winter change to spring.’

As Allan drove from the station to St. Peter’s he looked about him in amazement. Could this be Oxford? Everything seemed to be changed, there was no life about the place ; the very buildings which he loved seemed to have lost their beauty, and the whole place seemed to have assumed an air of dreariness which he had never noticed before. Poor Allan ! The dreariness was in his own heart.

The porter touched his hat with a grin when Allan alighted at the lodge of St. Peter’s, and said, ‘ Glad to see you up

again, sir,' and then, noticing Allan's black clothes and careworn face, the grin faded from his face, and he was silent. In his lodge he remarked to the under-porter that 'somethin' 'ad 'appened to Hinnes; 'e looks just like a ghost, and 'e's dressed in black.'

Allan went to his rooms and found a letter on his table from Lady Grizel's bankers, to say that they had instructions from her to place the sum of three hundred pounds to the credit of Mr. Innes at the Old Bank in Oxford. He sat down and wrote a receipt for the money, and then put on his gown, took up his cap, and went out to Hall. On the staircase he met Winckworth, who said,

'Ah, Innes, I have just come up—I am glad to see you. I was very sorry to read of your father's death in the paper. Come up and see me after Hall, will you?'

Allan merely nodded.

He went through the cloisters towards the Hall, and, as he met the various men,

they came and shook hands with him in silence, showing their sympathy, like Englishmen, by the pressure of their hands. Ingersoll came up from behind him, and, passing his arm through Allan's, said,

‘Innes, old chap, you must let me come and read with you this term; you will turn to moping and brooding if you are alone.’

‘Thanks, Ingersoll, I wish you would.’

After dinner Allan went up to Winckworth's rooms, and Winckworth said,

‘I don't believe in expressions of condolence, Innes: I wanted to talk to you about your schools. You must get a first. I hope your accession to wealth won't prevent your working any more,’ he added, with a smile.

Allan gave a short laugh, and said,

‘Accession to wealth! My dear sir, I am literally without one penny in the world.’

‘Oh, I beg your pardon, Innes, I always understood your father was a wealthy man.’

‘So he was, and the sudden loss of it killed him.’

Winckworth was silent for a while, then he rose, and, going over to Allan, said, kindly,

‘I am very sorry, Innes. I don’t think we will talk about your schools to-night.’

As the term went on, Allan found that he could not work properly. He was utterly unsettled in every way. All sorts of thoughts and considerations, which had had no previous place there, came thronging into his mind. He was restless, and constantly found his attention wandering.

‘It’s no use,’ he said one night in the last week of term to Ingersoll, who was reading in his rooms, ‘I can’t work properly. I shall get a second, and, after all, what does it matter? I don’t know what on earth I shall do when I go down. I will not be a parson.’

At this moment there was a tap at the door, and Castello put in his head, and, in his mincing voice, said,

‘ May I come in ? ’

‘ Of course you may,’ said Allan ; ‘ bring a chair up to the fire, not that big one—you can’t get that one in ; bring the small one.’

‘ Thank you, no,’ said Castello.

‘ Why will you never sit on a cane-bottomed chair, Castello ? ’ said Ingersoll.

‘ Because I object to have my posterior covered with regular hexagons,’ answered Castello.

Allan smiled and said,

‘ Sit on what and where you like ; come on, I have chucked reading for to-night. Let us talk.’

‘ Why won’t you be a parson, Innes ? ’ said Ingersoll.

‘ Because I won’t.’

‘ That isn’t a very powerful reason, is it ? ’

‘ No, it isn’t. And, if you want a better one, I will give it you.’

Castello, in his small voice, said,

‘ I am going to take orders, Innes ; let

me have the benefit of your sapient reasons why I should not do so.'

'Will you tell me why you are going to take orders?' said Allan.

Castello shrugged his shoulders, and said,

'Well, the governor wants it, and it is a respectable way of gaining one's livelihood, at any rate.'

'Exactly!' said Allan. 'You have said exactly what I wanted you to say. You are going to be a parson because some one else wants you to do it, and because it is a respectable way of gaining a livelihood. It makes me angry to think of it. Do you think Christ's disciples thought whether it was a respectable way of gaining a livelihood, when they took it up as a profession?'

'But, my dear Innes, aren't we told that the labourer is worthy of his hire?' said Ingersoll.

'I don't deny it,' said Allan, getting excited, 'and no one would want the parson

to starve ; but does it not strike you as mean and despicable that men have to be bribed to become parsons. What are your fat livings, deaneries, and bishoprics but bribes ? Come and be good, and teach other people to be good, and we will pay you handsomely and clothe you in purple and fine linen. Did you ever see—meet—or hear of a clergyman who would not snap at a good living, and at the same time preach on the text that it is easier for a camel to go through the “ needle’s eye ” than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven ? I agree with Hendersyde, who was talking to me about it at the Union the other night. He says he regards about eighty per cent. of parsons as bare-faced frauds.’

‘ I am glad you can quote an opinion so well worth having as Hendersyde’s,’ broke in Castello. ‘ I think him the most contemptible man I ever had the pleasure of meeting. Deverill described him exactly

the other day as "a person who, in his more lucid moments, occasionally had glimpses of the obvious."

Ingersoll smiled, and Allan went on,

'And then you ask me why I don't become a parson. I think that a parson should be one who had of his own free will deliberately chosen his profession in his boyhood, and should have been brought up from his boyhood with that idea always before him, and ought not to be one who is shovelled into the Church because everything else has failed, or because he hasn't brains enough to do anything else. It all arises out of that miserable system of not allowing a boy to choose his own profession. It is much better that he should plod on doing his best at what he likes, rather than that he should be forced to make his daily bread by playing the hypocrite. What right has any man to say to his son, you shall be a doctor, or a barrister, or a clergyman,

whether you like it or not? You, Castello, are the youngest son. Your father cannot afford to give you more than your university education, so it is a case of "take orders." Position and an honourable means of livelihood. Just think of the men one knows now who are going to take orders and become our spiritual pastors and masters. Take half-a-dozen in this college alone. In a year from now they will be curates, preaching with folded hands and with pious eyes of the pomps and vanities of this wicked world. You know perfectly well the men I mean, notorious for their evil living. They will tell you they only came up to get a degree and become curates, and with a leer they tell you also that one must have experience of the wickedness of the world before one can speak of it with authority to one's flock.'

'At any rate, Innes, you will acknowledge that it is better for a man to live his

evil life before he is ordained, and then, as far as he can, leave it behind him, instead of indulging in the lower vices afterwards, as they say the priests of some Roman Catholic countries do.'

'Not at all, it is only a question of custom. So long as the great places in the Church are offered as a prize to the man who is politically wise in his generation, or who has friends at Court, or who can charm the ear with honeyed words, so long will our religion be what it is and what it has been for years and years, a mere farce, sheltering under the mask of probity. I know neither of you believe me, and I don't care if you don't. I am absolutely convinced that I am right. What right has a bishop to leave so many thousands of pounds behind him at his death? Is the Church to be considered among the more lucrative mercantile businesses? For what does a Welshman, as a rule, take holy orders? That he may get position.

How many of those ungainly creatures you see slinking down the Turl into Jesus, from whom a perennial odour of leeks emanates, think they have a divine gift of oratory which they ought to use in the service of their Creator? I don't doubt that they all do fancy themselves capable of great things as orators, and, moreover, they will use their powers—for a consideration.'

'You are rather hard on the Welshmen, Innes.'

'Not a bit of it. Most of those men you see are the sons of small farmers; they are shot through the schools, with difficulty, I will allow—and naturally prefer position in society, broadcloth, and fine linen, to corduroys and the plough-tail, where they ought to be. They take orders for position, and that is one of the great reasons why the Church in Wales is so unstable. Your ordinary Welsh parson is a boor with a smattering of the dead lan-

guages and theology, and cares about as much for the immortal souls of his parishioners as he does for his neighbour's cat. The only excuse for their taking orders is that, in some cases, the man's own private life is improved thereby, but that is only a selfish view of the matter, and surely the keynote of Christianity is unselfishness.'

'Surely you will allow that some of the Welsh parsons are good and clever men, Innes?' said Ingersoll.

'Of course I will allow that some of them are good—but clever, no! that is to say, not in any way brilliant; for mere cleverness is a very common quality. There may be eminent men among the clergy in Wales, but they don't show it. Perhaps their innate modesty compels them to hide their light under a bushel. Can you name me one single eminent, really eminent, Welshman in the last fifty years?'

Ingersoll was silent.

‘No, you can’t—of course you can’t. They have a poet just now, it’s true. I don’t know why I am referring to Welsh parsons in particular. The English are nearly as bad. And yet I don’t know. I suppose you both know that very old tale of the Welsh parson who announced that “next Thursday would be Good Friday; it ought to have been last Friday, but indeed to goodness he did forget.” I don’t suppose it’s true, but the very fact of such a thing being invented about the Welsh parson shows that they are not held in that high esteem which ought to be granted to a clergyman.’

Castello rose, and said,

‘Good-night, Innes; I have no doubt you mean well, but you set too high a standard for us poor ordinary mortals. Besides, you are becoming ribald.’

‘Don’t go, Castello. I don’t mean, for one instant, to include you among the

category of black sheep. There are many men who are actuated by the purest and most disinterested motives when they become parsons, but I am afraid the majority are not. You must not suppose that I want to tar them all with the same brush. If you quote me a man like Charles Kingsley, I am dumb. *There* was a man and a Christian, if you like—and some of the noblest men who ever lived have been parsons, but they are few—they are few.'

'Good-night, Innes; get to bed yourself, it is nearly one.'

'By Jove, so it is; are you going too, Ingersoll? Good-night.'

It is a curious thing that Englishmen should worry themselves and rack their brains over the problems of religion, as many of them do. Can you fancy a Spaniard troubling himself about his immortal soul? Not he—he is much too wise or too lazy (which is it?) to do that. He

secures its safety and well-being in the world to come by paying down hard cash, and he will take care not to pay more than he thinks is absolutely necessary moreover. It is a simpler method certainly that the majority of us Englishmen possess: but business-like traffic and speculation in such an exceedingly intangible commodity as one's soul does not recommend itself to the Englishman, so he contents himself with moral speculation on the subject.

Allan made up his mind to stay up in Oxford during the Easter vacation, and found no difficulty in persuading Castello and Ingersoll to do the same, and a very pleasant, quiet time they had. After reading all the morning they would stroll to the Upper river, and sail up in centre-boards to Godstow. They had become accustomed to Allan's ramblings, and his wild ideas for regenerating the world. One glorious April day, when the sun was shining brightly and a strong west wind

was blowing, they were walking to the Upper river, as usual, after lunch.

‘The river will be awfully high after these last three days’ rain, Innes,’ said Ingersoll.

‘Yes, I expect we shall have some sport getting up to Godstow to-day. But isn’t it a glorious day? Look at the pollards there just beginning to turn green. It is worth living to-day, and yet——’ He stopped, and his face became sad and overcast. He was far away from Oxford, by the bedside of his dying father. He soon brightened up again. ‘Here we are at the boat-house. Now then, Ned, look sharp with the *Daisy*, we are going to do a record up to Godstow and back.’

‘Why, ye’re never goin’ to try centre-boardin’ to-day. The river’s runnin’ ten mile an hour.’

‘Yes, we are. I’ll manage all right.’

‘Well, sir, I suppose if you say you’re goin’ you are goin’. I’ll get her round.

You'll get as far as the bend there, but I'm hanged if you'll get any further with this wind.'

'Never mind, we'll try.'

The *Daisy* was got ready, and they sailed away very slowly up the stream to the first turn, and by skilful manipulation on the part of Allan, they managed to get within three or four hundred yards of Godstow, but no further.

''Bout ship, Castello, we can't get any further, and it's getting late.'

The wind had been coming in fitful gusts from all quarters for the last quarter-of-an-hour.

'It will be hard work getting down without gybing the sail. Come on.'

She got down all right to the open water about three hundred yards above the boat-house. The wind had been strong when they started, but it had got unsteady, and stronger when it did come. As they were doubling the bend, the wind shifted sud-

denly, caught the sail on the other side, and over the boat went instantly. Ingersoll and Allan were soon on the bank, as they were only some four yards from the shore, Castello was not so lucky. His head appeared for one instant, and one leg was sticking out of the water. He seemed to be going along with the boat.

‘ Good God, he must be caught in the sheet,’ said Allan.

He opened his knife, plunged in, cut the sheet, and holding it in his hand he got ashore and dragged Castello, who was entangled in it, to the bank. He was not much the worse. He coughed and spluttered for a time, and then said quietly,

‘ Thanks, Innes, that was a narrow shave. Nearly put an end to my being a parson. We are all “ dem’d, moist, unpleasant bodies.” Let’s run home.’

‘ But the *Daisy* ?’

‘ Oh, she’s all right. Ned sees her. He’ll get her at the weir.’

As they came up to the boatman he growled out,

‘ You may think yourselves uncommon lucky to get off with a ducking, young gents. No one but a madman would go out a-centreboardin’ a day like this—with a flood on, too.’

‘ All right, Ned,’ said Allan, ‘ we are safe anyhow.’

‘ ’Tain’t your faults that ye are.’

Allan laughed, and said,

‘ We won’t do it never no more;’ and then ran back to college.

CHAPTER VI.

‘It is only with Renunciation that Life, properly speaking, can be said to begin.’

A FORTNIGHT before his schools came on, Allan went up to Ardarrochar to take a rest. He felt very uneasy about his first. He found that, try as he would, he could not keep his attention fixed on his work. He could not concentrate his energies on the matter in hand. His mind was constantly wandering off to something else. How easy it is to contemplate an examination with indifference, when nothing depends on it. Six months before, Allan was as certain that he would get a first as he was that he would go to bed that night. Nothing depended on it. But now he was

in an agony of doubt, for his whole existence depended upon it.

‘Well, Allan,’ said George, as he met him at the station, ‘you don’t look particularly bright, you look fagged out—you have been reading too hard.’

‘No, George, it isn’t that. I have read very steadily, but I am worried; if it didn’t matter whether I got a first or not, I think I might get one, but it is the constant thinking of the future which worries me and spoils all my reading.’

‘But why need you worry about it, Allan? What have you made up your mind to do?’

‘If I get a pretty good first, I shall have a shy at the All Souls Fellowship in December. If I get a second, I suppose I must be a schoolmaster. At any rate, it is a living, and if I am lucky and get into a good public school, there is a chance of something more later. You see, George, I can’t wait. I must make money at once,

so that schoolmastering is practically the only thing open to me.'

By this time they had reached the house, and Amy was standing inside the door ready to receive them.

'Here's Amy. Marriage seems to agree with you,' said Allan, as he kissed her.

'It depends a good deal on the person one marries,' answered Amy, looking lovingly at George the while.

'I think we are pretty happy,' said George, as he put his arm round Amy's waist, and they went into the house.

After dinner Allan took up the conversation practically where it had left off when they arrived.

'It doesn't seem to matter much now-a-days whether one gets a good class in Mods. or not, if one wants to be a schoolmaster. Winckworth tells me that my being captain of the 'Varsity at football is every bit as good as a first in Mods. for the business.'

‘That’s very true in one way, Allan. I rather fancy that what Winckworth meant was that a good athlete stands a better chance than a man who has no recommendation of that sort. But you must remember that very few of the great public schools play Rugby football. It would be no recommendation to you, for instance, at Eton, Harrow, Winchester, or the Charterhouse, and I doubt very much if it would be of much service to you even at Rugby or Marlborough. It is only at the small schools whose reputations are not yet fully established where it would be of much service to you. If you had been captain of the eleven or president of the boat-club, it would have been a different matter.’

‘I suppose that’s true, George. However, I hope that it won’t come to school-mastering. Let’s hope for the best. I have still a great desire to go out to Australia, and investigate that Black Hawk business. I am not at all sure in my own

mind that everything is as it should be in connection with its failing, though I cannot quite bring myself to suspect Reid. Mother does. She says that at first she could not bear the sight of him ; but that, owing to my father's great attachment to him, she allowed her suspicions to be lulled to rest, but that now she is convinced that all the time he was untrustworthy. I wish to goodness we had some trustworthy agent out there ; but now we can do nothing, because it would be so horribly expensive, and, besides, unsatisfactory.'

George knew that it was hopeless to offer Allan any pecuniary assistance, and merely replied,

' I am afraid it *is* rather hopeless, Allan. From what I saw of Reid, he struck me as being a very straightforward and honest man ; but, of course, I was too young to judge.'

' After all, it might have been worse. It

was uncommonly lucky for mother that Blairavon let so soon. By the way, have the people come into it yet? They took it from April on.'

George said that it was as yet unoccupied, and that the people who had taken it were not coming till August.

'I am glad of that. I want to go and see that everything is in order, and I shouldn't have cared to go had other people been in it.'

Two or three days afterwards they went over to Blairavon, and with a heavy heart Allan went over the now deserted house, the rooms looking very ghostly with the pictures and chairs all shrouded in white. He unlocked the door of what had been his own sitting-room, where he did the very little reading he had ever done at home, and had smoked, and wasted time generally. He looked round it. Everything was as he had left it, even to some trout-flies sticking in the wall-paper.

He went to the window and looked out, as he had looked out hundreds of times before, over the great sea of waving elms that dipped gradually to the river below.

‘ I wonder when I shall sit here again ? ’ he thought to himself. ‘ Perhaps never.’

‘ It’s a bonny place to have to leave, isn’t it, George ? ’

‘ Yes,’ said George ; ‘ but I hope it won’t be for long. Perhaps some one will leave you a fortune, or you will make one. You have a wealthy relative in Africa somewhere ? ’

‘ Yes, a first cousin of my father’s ; but the less said about him the better. I have heard it said that he has three wives alive, and is divorced from none of them ; but as one is in England, another in Australia, and another at the Cape, they are in blissful ignorance of each other’s existence. No, I don’t think that he is likely to leave me any money, nor should I be particularly pleased to receive it if he did.’

Allan enjoyed his fortnight at Ardarrochar immensely. It was the leafy month of June, and the place looked at its best. He did not do much. He was content to potter about with George and Amy, occasionally throwing a fly on the burn in the early morning.

‘ I have lost all my restlessness, I think,’ he said to George. ‘ A year ago this would have bored me. I suppose circumstances do change one’s nature more or less : I feel ever so much older than I did. It is only because I have been made to think : I don’t suppose I ever really thought before.’

This was the night before Allan went up for his schools, and George answered him,

‘ What rot you are talking, Allan, about feeling old and your nature changing. You are down on your luck generally, and have got a fit of the “ blues ” in particular. Wait till you have got a first in the schools,

and are a Fellow of All Souls, and are writing the "History of Nero's favourite Cat," for which you will be paid vast sums, as would be only right for such a valuable contribution to the literature of the nation. Then you will look at things in a very different light. You have all the world before you. You are a mere child at present, in years.'

Allan laughed, and said,

'It is no use being in the blues, that is certain;' then he yawned. 'I must go to bed, George.'

Allan went up to Oxford, and did much better than he had expected in the schools. The papers seemed to suit him, and he felt that he was at least doing himself justice. He went down immediately after his schools were over, having to come up in three weeks' time for his *viva-voce*.

On saying good-bye to Winckworth, who asked him how he thought he had done in schools, he answered,

‘Well, sir, I hardly like to say. I think that I have done as good papers as I am capable of, but whether I have got a first or not is a very different matter.’

‘I sincerely hope you have, Innes; and, if you have, I also hope you will go in for the All Souls Fellowship in December.’

‘I fully intend to, sir. I have a couple of hours on my hands before going up to town: will you come and lunch with me at Vincent’s Club, and we can talk there. I am abominably hungry.’

‘Very well, Innes. I have not been inside Vincent’s since I was an undergraduate. I am a member, you know.’

‘Are you, sir? I thought that it was originally founded as a purely athletic club?’

‘Quite right; it may interest you to know that I rowed for two years in the trials, and was reserve man for the eight in my last year.’

‘By Jove, I never knew that. I thought

you had been a snu—that is, that you had done nothing but read all your time.’

‘That is a very common mistake, Innes, made by all undergraduates. They seem to think that dons could never have been young. They regard them as dry, uninteresting machines, specially constructed for the annoyance of the undergraduate.’

‘I certainly should have been inclined to regard them all in that light, sir, if I had not known you so well. And you must confess that it is hard to imagine —— and ——’ mentioning two well-known names in Oxford, ‘as anything but animated philosophy-grinding machines.’

Winckworth laughed.

‘That is true, Innes. Fifteen years ago they looked exactly the same, and fifteen years hence, I expect, they will be very much what they are now; but still some of us are human, you must admit.’

‘Of course I do, sir. You have taught me that.’

‘As to the All Souls Fellowships, Innes,’ said Winckworth, as they were sitting with a lobster-salad between them at Vincent’s, ‘I do not doubt that there will be many better firsts than yours, because, you see, you have done all your reading in two years, and many of the other men will have been reading for two years at school before they came up, and another year here before you began. But you have the advantage of knowing most of the resident Fellows, and it goes a long way with them, *caeteris paribus*, if a man is a gentleman.’

‘But these are all castles in the air, sir. If I get my first, all well and good; if I don’t—well, then, I shall be a schoolmaster.’

‘You are sure of a good berth at that,’ said Winckworth.

‘Let us hope so,’ said Allan, ‘for I shall need it; but I must say good-bye now. I must go and collect my things for the train, sir. Good-bye.’

‘ Good-bye, Innes. I wish this was the end of your first, instead of your last term.’

‘ That is the fellow,’ said Allan to himself, after he had left him, ‘ whom everybody slangs and calls inhuman, and dry, and heartless. Well, I have discovered one thing, and that is, that you never know a man till you *do* know him ; which is a very wise remark, by the way.’

Allan came up for his *viva-voce*, and in a fortnight after that he read among the names of the Honour School of Modern History, ‘ Class 2. Innes, Allan : E coll. S. Petr.’

He was staying in Edinburgh at the time with his mother. He brought her the list, and said,

‘ Mother dear, I have only got a second.’

‘ I am so sorry, dear, but it doesn’t matter much, does it ?’

‘ I suppose not—but now I must get a berth as a schoolmaster.’

He went down to Ardarrochar for the

12th of August, and found a large party there.

‘It’s schoolmastering after all, you see, George.’

‘Well, Allan, I daresay it may do you some good ; they say that a little hardship is good for one at times, and I must say that I cannot think of anything more inconceivably bestial than schoolmastering.’

Allan said, laughingly,

‘But, George, have you never heard it called the noblest profession under the sun?’

‘Yes, I have, and I have always thought that the people who called it that were talking arrant nonsense. But where are you going, Allan?’

‘Lord knows. I find that what you said is perfectly true. The old public schools won’t have me on the strength of my being a Rugby instead of an Association player. The newer ones won’t have me because my degree isn’t good enough ; they say that if

it had been a second in Greats instead of History, it would have been a different matter; but they think my classics may have become somewhat rusty in two years, and do you know, George, I don't think they are very far wrong. However, I *must* go somewhere next month, so I have made up my mind to take the first thing that offers, bad, good, or indifferent. I can't account for my failure in the schools. I thought I had done as well as it was possible for me to do, and I was nowhere near the first class—I only got a moderate second.'

'No one ever can judge of his own work,' said George, sententiously. 'Some men are so sanguine that they fancy always that they have done infinitely better than they actually have, and then there are others who are so despondent that they cannot be brought to believe that they have not been ploughed, even though they may have done work up to a first. I

wonder if you remember Thomson—no—he went down just before you came up, but you know him by sight, at any rate. He went away for a week before his exam., and telegraphed to the president that he was going to “scratch.” The president had him literally dragged up to the schools, and, as you probably know, he got a first in every paper, and is now a Fellow of New College.’

Allan stayed for three weeks at Ardarrochar, and still could not find any school, even of what one may call the second-class order of public schools, which appeared to have a particular desire for his person.

‘The Fates are against me, George. No one seems to want me. I wish there were a vacancy at Lussburgh. I am sure the head-master would take me there.’

‘It’s just possible, Allan, that the fact of your having lived in a very fast set at Oxford for your first two years may be acting against you. Those sort of things

leak out, and are of course exaggerated in the process, and I do not doubt that a good many head-masters may have heard from some of your kind friends that you were a little rowdy, to put it mildly, when you first went up.'

'That's it,' said Allan. 'Of course there are lots of men who were up with me who will now be at these public schools, and I expect they have given me a pretty bad character. However, it can't be helped. By Jove, I have it, George. I will write to Prettyman; he is at a school in some outlandish place in Wales, and says it is a charming place, and he is as happy as a king. I have his address somewhere.'

He wrote, and in four or five days he got an answer which told him that he had just applied in the nick of time, as there was a vacancy, and he was sure that the rector would take Allan if he applied. Allan did apply, and received an answer to the effect that, owing to the very strong

recommendation of Mr. Prettyman, he had determined to offer Mr. Innes an appointment at Llanwch.

Allan showed the letter to George, who laughed, and said,

‘What an awful name. I wonder how it’s pronounced? It probably sounds like Hullabaloo in Welsh.’

‘I don’t know,’ said Allan. ‘The salary is not exorbitant, as you will observe. I suppose I must learn to live on a hundred and fifty pounds per annum.’

‘Of course you will,’ said George; ‘heaps of men live on half that, and manage to dress respectably too. How the deuce they do it is a mystery, but they do.’

‘I don’t care much,’ said Allan. ‘It is a start, and I am thankful I have something to do. I feel there is a load off my mind. I shouldn’t care to take anything from my mother. She has little enough, when she has Jack to keep as well.’

‘Well, there is another way of looking

at that, Allan. Some people might say that you were acting generously in giving up all that in reality belongs to you to your mother.'

'But, George, you would not care to see me do anything else?'

'Of course I wouldn't; but there are a good many men who would not look at the matter in the same light as you do, of that I am quite certain.'

'Poor mother. She hasn't too much now. After paying her house rent and servants, she has only about two hundred and fifty a-year to live on, and that isn't too much, is it?'

When George was in his dressing-room that night, Amy came to him in her dressing-gown, with her beautiful wavy brown hair streaming down her back, and said,

'George, I want to make a proposition to you. I want to give back to Allan the five thousand pounds I had as my marriage portion, if you don't mind. We have heaps

of money, and I feel as if I were robbing mother by keeping it.'

'My darling,' said George, 'that is like you. I have felt very much the same myself. It was quite impossible that I should suggest it, but I will make it up to you. But it is one thing, wanting to give Allan the money, and another matter making him accept it. I am very much afraid he won't. It will have to be done in a very roundabout way, if it is done at all. We must think over it, my love. One thing is quite certain, we must not allow Allan to go wandering away to Australia on a hopeless quest about the mines there. He would stay there if he found that he had gone on a wild-goose chase, and he is much too good a person to hide his light in a place like Australia. In the meantime I think that that idea has somewhat cooled with him; but it may be fanned into flame again. I think at present we had better let him try his hand at

schoolmastering. A little adversity, they say, is good for a man, though I am no judge, as I have had nothing but pleasant ways all my life, so far.'

Allan went back to what was now his home in Edinburgh, to make preparations for his work at Llanweh.

Mrs. Innes was gradually recovering from the shock of her husband's sudden death, but she was still nervous and excitable. Two or three days before Allan started for Wales, she said to him,

'I am so terribly sorry, Allan dear, that you have to undergo all this drudgery, when the prospects of your life were so different. I now wish that we had never left Australia. I did not want to come at first: and if it had not been for Douglas's death, I never should have come.'

'Don't trouble about me, mother, I shall be happy enough. The life of a schoolmaster is very nice in its way. The only thing I have ever heard any complaints

about is the salary. People talk about its being the noblest profession under the sun : if that is the case, I wonder why it is not better paid. I suppose the honour of being a member of such a noble band is its own reward. I must say I should prefer something more tangible than the honour. I shall be happy enough, mother, and something will turn up. Don't fret, mother dear.'

Towards the end of September he started for Wales, to begin life as a school-master at Llanwch.

CHAPTER VII.

‘Poverty is infamous in England.’

THE change that had come about in Allan's life was a very real one. If you will consider for a moment, you will see this for yourself. At Oxford he had had an allowance large enough to cover any reasonable expense. Unless a man wants to buy and keep tame white elephants, or do something equally preposterous, there is very little he cannot do on five hundred pounds a year at Oxford. Allan had seen Oxford life in all its phases. He had gone headlong into amusement of all sorts. One thing alone he had always kept clear of, the one vice, which, of all others, is the most degrading.

‘Fashion be damned,’ he had said to a man who had jestingly twitted him on the point. ‘I have vices enough without giving way to what you say everybody does. If it is so fashionable, as you say, then I am uncommonly glad it has no charms for me.’

The man laughed sneeringly, and said perhaps Innes ‘knew best, and could please himself.’ The longer one conscientiously remains an optimist the better, but this is, unfortunately, a luxury denied, as a rule, to one very early in life. Allan had hunted, rowed, gone racing, and gambled to his heart’s content, and in spite of it all he had not been much spoilt. In his real nature he was the same bright, enthusiastic boy he had been five years before at school, when he had gone fishing with George and the head-master on the Kirkaig in Sutherland. He had finished his Oxford career by doing some really hard work, and his reward had been—disappointment. Not

that this did him any harm, it made him think a little on the seriousness of life. All the rioting and racket he had gone through at Oxford had the result, at the end of three years, of putting him in debt to the extent of three hundred and fifty pounds. Of this his father had paid off two hundred, and Allan, by strict economy, as he thought, had managed to dispose of fifty pounds more, during his last two terms at Oxford. Thus, when he went to Wales, he was still in debt to the tune of one hundred pounds, and his salary amounted to the magnificent sum of one hundred and fifty pounds per annum. As he came down in the train from Scotland, he made out plans in his head by which he could easily live on a hundred a year, and pay off his debts in two years. It may seem, to your mind, sagacious reader, that Allan was a very foolish young man. He could have got the money from Lady Grizel,—from George, he could even have used a

hundred pounds of the money which was really his own, but which he preferred that his mother should have. But he would not. His pride would not allow him. He blamed himself.

‘I have made my bed, I must lie on it,’ he had said. ‘It is by my own folly that I have incurred the debts, therefore by my own efforts they must be repaid.’

You will begin to see that in the eyes of that extremely wise person, the World, that Allan was an abject, irreclaimable idiot. But, if you look at the matter from another point of view, you will confess that the motives which inspired him to act as he did were chivalrous and right.

So Allan determined to live on one hundred pounds per annum. He had signally failed to live on five hundred for five months, or at the rate of twelve hundred a year at Oxford; for, after all, the Oxford year is only five months, and he practically spent nothing in the vacation. The

prospect of his living on a hundred a year then would, at first sight, appear at least improbable. ‘Pooh! what nonsense!’ you will say. ‘Thousands of young men in his position would be only too glad to get such a good salary as one hundred and fifty pounds a year, and would save money on it too.’ Very true. But just consider Allan’s case once more. Here was a man who from his infancy had been brought up in the utmost luxury, who had never known a want unsupplied, and who had lived for the last ten years under the impression, well founded enough, that he was to succeed to a fairly large fortune. Without one single note of warning he is suddenly beggared. Just think for a moment on what this means. It meant for Allan that he had to change practically every habit of his life. Not much for a young man, you will say. Possibly not much, but at any rate quite enough to take the rose-colour out of life. As

Allan said to himself, 'By Jove, I shall have to think twice now whether I can afford to buy a glass of beer if I am thirsty; and as for cigars, they are, for the present at any rate, non-existent so far as I am concerned. I ought to be able to dress on eight or ten pounds a-year,' (Allan, though no dandy, had spent at least fifty pounds on his dress, every year since he had been up to Oxford). 'Well, after all, I daresay water is as good as champagne if one is thirsty, and I think I almost prefer a briar-pipe to a "Henry Clay." Excellent in theory, but in practice hard to carry out, especially to a man circumstanced as Allan was.

So Allan went down to Wales. He changed at Shrewsbury, and, being tired of reading the novel he had with him, he contented himself with looking out of the window.

'H'm,' he said to himself, after they left Shrewsbury, 'this is a poor sort of a

country. I wonder if Llanwch is anywhere near Llwyn Bridge? I haven't the faintest idea where I am going to.'

After passing Craven Arms he began to get interested. The scenery was becoming more beautiful as each mile was passed.

'If Llanwch's like this, it won't be half bad.'

As the train rushed along he caught glimpses of heather-covered hills tinged with the rays of the setting sun, wooded glens, and silver streamlets. There are very few pieces of railway scenery which surpass the South Wales line from Craven Arms down towards Swansea. As Allan was gazing intently at a particularly beautiful piece of autumn colouring the train began to slacken, and, as it drew up, a head was thrust in at the window and some one shouted,

'There you are, old cock.'

Allan turned round and saw Prettyman.

'Is this Llanwch?'

‘Of course it is.’

Allan got out of the train, and, glancing round him with a sigh of relief, said,

‘I can live here happily enough.’

‘Oh, this is nothing to what you can see about ten miles out of here. The scenery all round is gorgeous. You can leave your luggage here; they will send for it from the school, and we can walk up to your rooms.’ As they came out of the station Prettyman, looking up the road, said, ‘Here’s one of your colleagues.’

Allan looked along the road and saw a small, loosely-built man wearing spectacles, shockingly badly dressed, coming towards them. Thinking to himself that Prettyman could not possibly mean him, he said, ‘Where, Prettyman?’

‘Right in front of you,’

‘What, *that* man?’

‘Yes,’ said Prettyman, in a low voice, as they were now quite close to him, ‘he ain’t much to look at, is he? and he dresses

abominably, but he is one of the best-hearted men I ever met. Wilson, let me introduce Mr. Innes.'

In a very small voice Wilson said,

'Glad to meet you;' and he turned to accompany them up the road. 'I must tell you, Innes,' he went on, 'that they are rather a curious lot of men here, but I think you will like them well enough. The school itself is curious, and Welsh boys are curious; but, take it all round, you might be much worse off.'

'Are you coming up into the town, Wilson?' said Prettyman.

'No, I shall go for a stroll.'

'Come on then, Innes. Your rooms are in the High Street. A man called Bright lives opposite to you.'

'Hadn't I better go and see the rector?'

'Oh, no; you can do that after dinner. We men in our house dine all together, and very often the other house-masters come too.'

Allan found his rooms, which were on the second-floor of a rambling old house in the main street of the town, very bright and clean. While he was inspecting the carpet and wall-paper with Prettyman, there was a terrific thud on the opposite side of the passage, followed by a sound as though something had crashed through wood.

‘Great Scott! what’s that?’ said Allan.

‘It’s only Bright; he is a little excitable at times. Come across, and I’ll introduce you.’

‘But is it safe?’

Prettyman laughed.

‘Of course, he is never excited for more than three seconds.’

He opened the door, and saw that a coal-scuttle was lying in the passage, and the lower panels of the opposite door had been smashed out. Prettyman went across the passage, knocked and went in, followed by Allan.

‘What’s the matter, Bright?’

‘Oh, nothing. My fire was out. I got angry, and threw the coal-scuttle through the door.’

Allan thought to himself that he had rather a dangerous neighbour, and, as a matter of fact, always after that took the precaution of locking and barring his door, whenever he saw or heard symptoms of excitability in Bright.

‘Let me introduce Mr. Innes, Bright.’

Allan then looked at him for the first time. He saw a very powerfully-built, short man, with an extraordinarily plain face, sitting in an arm-chair, smoking.

The man rose and said, ‘How d’ye do?’ to Allan, and as he spoke a smile so sweet and childlike broke out on his face that it changed the character of it altogether, and made it almost beautiful. Allan soon discovered that, naturally, he was as placid and sweet-tempered as a lamb, but that, when roused, he lost his temper for a

second or two, and then relapsed into his usual placidity.

When Allan went across to his room again, he said to Prettyman,

‘Doesn’t Bright find it rather expensive smashing his furniture in that way?’

‘He doesn’t often do it, and, besides, he’s a Fellow of his college, and spends no money, so he can afford to do it.’

‘Have you any more curiosities to show me, Prettyman?’

‘Not to-day. You will meet three other men at dinner. Come along down, it must be ready. It is half-past six, and that is our nominal dinner-hour.’

Wilson had come up to dinner in honour of Allan’s arrival, and in a thin voice and some particularly small beer he welcomed Allan among them in a prim little speech.

Allan thought that he could get along with the men well enough, only what struck him about them was that they all seemed to be overcome by a profound melancholy,

Prettyman alone being the exception. He soon learned the cause of this, but for the present he contented himself with vowing inwardly that he would soon remove it, and infuse some life into them. After dinner he went to interview the rector, who burst into a perfect hurricane of speech. Allan did not understand a solitary word of what was said, but when the rector ceased, grinned broadly, and said, 'H'm?' in an enquiring sort of way, Allan feebly answered, 'Yes,' and retired. As he went up to his rooms again, he said to himself,

'Well, this is a most extraordinary place. I wonder what on earth the man was driving at? I suppose it was English, or at least an attempt at it, and I also suppose he was giving me some idea of my work. I shall have to get it out of Prettyman.'

Thus Allan settled down to start life on one hundred and fifty pounds per annum. Those who have never experienced luxury

do not feel the loss of it (which, by the way, is an exceedingly sapient remark). It is merely a question of comparison. To a tramp, a beefsteak is the height of ambition and desire. He cannot conjure up in his mind anything more delicious and succulent. He fancies that he could eat beefsteak all day and every day for the rest of his natural existence. If, after a year say of juicy beefsteak, with an occasional chop, or even veal or venison, his supply is suddenly docked, and he descends again to mouldy bread and the remnants of cheese which, having become so hard that no one in the house, not even the dog, will eat it (do dogs eat cheese, by the way?) is handed to the first beggar that comes along (this kind of generosity goes by the generic name of charity), he is aggrieved, and finds life without beefsteak a mere vale of tears. He has tasted of luxury, and feels that he cannot do without it. Put Allan in the place of the tramp. His

beefsteak had consisted of lots of money, horses, champagne, good cigars, what are known as *recherché* dinners. His mouldy bread and hard cheese consisted of beef, beer, and tobacco. Very good things too, you will say. So they are. But do you know a man who will cheerfully accept mouldy bread after a life-long experience of beefsteak?

Luckily Allan was young, and he hardly gave two thoughts to his position: but he found himself constantly spending money in ways which did not recommend themselves to him as extravagant. Habit had made them mere trivial necessities of everyday life. Still he tried his hardest to economize, and, being lucky enough to get some private pupils, he managed actually to save fifty pounds during his first year, which went to the vultures in Oxford.

Having been a celebrated athlete at Oxford, he soon became the idol of the boys, who naturally admire strength and athletic

skill more than knowledge, consequently he had no difficulty in keeping the wild Welsh boys in order, a thing which sorely taxed the ingenuity and temper of some of the other men.

About a fortnight after the term began there was a football match, and Allan was going to umpire. He was walking on to the field chatting to Prettyman, when he suddenly stopped dead and clutched Prettyman's arm.

‘What’s the matter, Innes?’

‘Who are those people?’ said Allan, motioning towards two ladies, who were standing at the side of the ground.

‘Oh, that’s Mrs. Vivian and her daughter.’

‘That’s the girl I saw at Llwyn Bridge.’

‘Then you can renew your acquaintance. Come, and I will introduce you. I have been several times up at their house to dinner and lawn-tennis; and they sometimes come down here to see a match.’

They walked across the ground to the ladies.

‘ May I introduce Mr. Innes, Mrs. Vivian. Mr. Innes, Miss Vivian.’

Allan bowed, and they both blushed slightly.

‘ Did not my mother and I see you fishing at Llwyn Bridge once, Mr. Innes?’

‘ You surely don’t remember that?’ said Allan, delighted. ‘ It must be nearly three years ago.’

‘ Oh! yes, I remember you quite distinctly. We had been watching you for nearly ten minutes, when you looked up, and I had got quite excited over the fish. That is why I cried out involuntarily to my mother.’

They talked for a few minutes, and Allan shook hands and left them.

‘ He seems a nice man, Muriel,’ said Mrs. Vivian.

‘ Yes, I think he does.’

After the match, Allan walked off the ground with Prettyman.

‘What is her name, Prettyman?’

‘I told you before—Vivian.’

‘Yes, but her Christian name?’

‘I don’t know. I never asked Mrs. Vivian her name.’

‘Don’t be an ass, Prettyman—the daughter.’

‘Oh, her name’s Muriel.’

‘Muriel,’ repeated Allan, softly. ‘It is a funny thing I should come across her again, Prettyman. Do you know that I have never forgotten her, and she has been constantly crossing my vision for nearly three years.’

‘Well, you needn’t trouble yourself about her, old man; they say she is engaged to marry your old friend Thomas.’

‘What? Going to marry that beast!’

‘Ho, ho! Since when has he become a beast? It is not long ago that you thought him a very good sort of fellow.’

‘For a man’s acquaintance, yes ; but, good heavens, to think of his marrying that sweet girl—he shan’t.’

Prettyman laughed and said,

‘I think you won’t have much chance there, Innes ; her father is a proud old man, and will look considerably higher than a schoolmaster for his daughter, of that I can assure you.’

In his own room that night Allan mused long over the sweet fair face and violet eyes, and he repeated the words, Muriel Vivian, over to himself many times.

‘What pretty names ! and she is going to marry Thomas, is she ? Ah, well, I suppose I can’t help it, at any rate ;’ and then he began thinking over the changes in his own fortunes from the time he first saw her and now.

Then he was full of hope and pride, glorying in his name and in his noble inheritance, a fit consort for any lady in his own rank of life. *Now*, nothing left but

his name and the mere shadow of an inheritance: for all practical purposes a pauper. What a contrast!

‘Heigh-ho, I mustn’t allow myself to fall in love with her, because if I did win her heart I have nothing to offer her; but, if I possibly can, I will prevent her from marrying Thomas. Bah, what a fool I am! as if I could do anything in the matter. No, my friend, you will not be consulted, and you had better go to bed.’

He went to bed, and went to sleep, and dreamt that he and Muriel were on a spar in the open sea, and that a shark with Thomas’s head was following them, and Muriel was clinging to him and imploring him in God’s name to save her from destruction. He awoke and muttered,

‘And I will, if it lies in my power to do so.’

CHAPTER VIII.

‘ A life without sun ; without health, without hope, without
delight,
Is anything here on earth ’

ALLAN found life very tolerable at Llanwch. A favourite with everybody, masters and boys alike, his bright nature and cheery laugh made the master's dining-room a much pleasanter place than it had formerly been. He soon discovered why most of the men looked so sad and weary. He discovered, what it is not very difficult for a person with any perception to discover, that they were all disappointed men. Most schoolmasters in the smaller public schools and in the private schools are disappointed men. People will tell you glibly that all schoolmasters are prigs. But is this a fair

statement of the case? The successful few, those who by good fortune or successful flattery get the few, the very few good places in what may be called the lower branches of the profession, are invariably prigs of the worst type, attributing to their own excellence what the fickle goddess has thrown in their way. Allan was talking the matter over with Prettyman one day, and had said,

‘Are all schoolmasters in places like this so utterly downcast?’ and Prettyman answered,

‘It is not among the very young men at a school that this settled sadness is noticeable. The young men are still full of enthusiasm, fancying themselves, in their day-dreams, appointed Head-masters of large schools with preposterous salaries at the age of thirty. But when two or three years have gone, and they begin to see that the only possible change they can look forward to is merely a position of the

same sort in another school, then it is that the hopelessness of existence comes full upon them, and they assume an air, without knowing it, of settled despair.'

'But surely the case is not so hopeless for all?' said Allan.

'Not for absolutely all,' said Prettyman, 'but for very nearly all. Take a case: say a younger son of a large family; his father makes a final sacrifice and sends him to the university, telling him that he can do no more for him, and that when he leaves the university he must make his own way entirely. The boy is only too delighted at the prospect of a university life, thinking, if ever he does think of the future at that age, that he will make his way easily enough in the world. He works hard and well at college, and yet, by bad luck, he finds himself at the top of the second class instead of at the bottom of the first in his examination. What is the result? To a head-master a first class-man

is a first class-man and capable of doing such and such work ; a second class-man is a second class-man, (it doesn't matter if he is superior in every way to the first class-man), and consequently incapable of doing the work of the first class-man.'

'That's hardly fair,' broke in Allan, 'all head-masters are not like that.'

'Most of them,' said Prettyman. 'Listen to what I have to say, Innes, and don't interrupt. Our hypothetical man has to content himself with a post in one of the smaller schools. Still he hopes, "I will show them that I am as good as though I had taken a first," and he works on hoping that merit will be recognized. Poor fool ! He may spare himself the trouble. As a second class-man he is a second class-man, and the dolt and the genius are on the same level. At first he takes an interest in his boys, and does his utmost for them, both in and out of school, but he soon finds that this meets with practically no recog-

nition from either boys or the head-master. They take it as a matter of course. So he gradually relaxes his energy, and at the end of five years or so he lapses into a mere machine, which will dole out well-worn axioms on any subject which may be required. There is no hope—none. An enquiry by a Royal Commission into the salaries paid to school-masters, university men, all over England, would produce some startling revelations. A school-master's education will probably cost from first to last from fifteen hundred to two thousand pounds, putting it at a low estimate. He has in all probability lived in comparative luxury all his life. His habits and tastes are formed, when suddenly he is plunged into an abyss from which there is no escape, save by mere chance. He finds, when too late, that he is tied to a profession which he probably dislikes. It is too late to start business. He has no money. He has no qualification for a

business life. He has no funds to educate himself as a doctor or a solicitor. The Bar is of course out of the question. He is forever bound, tied down to a life of genteel poverty. Some of them perjure their souls, and take holy orders (save the mark !) to get the few extra pounds per annum which the perennial use of a white tie secures to them.'

'But, Prettyman,' again broke in Allan, 'you are surely talking awful nonsense now. Heaps of school-masters are well enough off.'

'I am not talking nonsense,' said Prettyman, waxing warm, 'but d——d good sober sense. You miss the point altogether. I am not referring to the great public schools. I merely refer to a great mass of men who will be found in the smaller public schools, and in private schools and grammar schools. There are many men who have had an expensive education, and who, through ill fortune, or from the fact

that they are crammed into a profession for which they have not the brains nor the aptitude, are toiling for sixty, fifty, ay, forty pounds a-year. Gentlemen these—in reduced circumstances. Then some infernal ass says, “Oh! but consider the beautiful long holidays.” Quite so. How is a man going to spend his holiday who makes sixty pounds a-year? When he was at school or the university he would go away and fish somewhere, or shoot, or go on a reading-party. Now, supposing his friend Lord Oystermouth asks him down to shoot at Oystermouth Castle, he feels at first a flush of pleasure that his old friend has not forgotten him; and then he says to himself, “I can’t go, my shooting-togs are all worn out, and I cannot afford to get any more. I have had to sell my gun. I have just enough money to pay my fare to Oystermouth and back, third-class. I have no money to tip the keepers or the butler. I can’t go.”’

Prettyman stopped here to take breath, and Allan said,

‘By gad, Prettyman, you paint an uncommonly nice picture. It can’t be half as bad as all that—your liver’s out of order——’

‘Wait,’ said Prettyman. ‘I have only stopped to get wind; it is worse than that. Listen. Supposing one of these unhappy wretches were to fall in love, and wish to marry. He naturally would want his wife to live in comfort, and in the way that his own mother and sister had lived. But he can offer her nothing. He finds it all he can do to exist himself on the miserable pittance which is doled out to him as a member of the noblest profession under the sun. He must eat his heart out in solitude. There are none of the joys of love and marriage for him. If he fell in love, he must indeed worship the object of his affection “in distant reverence.” It will probably do him good in one way. It

will take him out of himself. It is good for any man to be in love.'

Allan laughed and blushed, and Prettyman continued,

'Oho, Innes, so you have left your heart in the north. You need not be ashamed of it, old chap. I wish I had too. I hope she has lots of money, because it's a devilish poor look-out for you if she hasn't. Marriage! Great Scott, that is out of the question for me, at least. There are people who complain that immorality is on the increase again. So long as such an anomaly exists as that men who have been brought up as gentlemen, educated as gentlemen, and are expected to live as gentlemen afterwards, are paid a salary at which a fifth-rate artizan would turn up his nose in scorn, there is nothing more to be expected.'

'But, Prettyman, heaps of schoolmasters are married and happy enough.'

'My dear Innes, will you not interrupt?

You miss the point altogether of what I am talking about. Let me drill into your silly old head again that I am referring to men who start the game as a means of livelihood, in the lower branches, without any private fortune of their own. If I am boring you, I will shut up. But——'

'No, no—go on. I like to hear what you have to say.'

'It's God's own truth, Innes, as you will find to your cost, maybe, and what a life it is! The system of education in England is so hopelessly insane that there is no possibility for a master or a boy to develop any originality. It is positively cruel to put certain boys through a mill in the way which is now done. And it amounts to an insult to ask a man to do it. It should be done by machines. Do you remember what Carlyle says? "How can an inanimate, mechanical Gerund-grinder, the like of whom will in a subsequent century be manufactured at Nürnberg out of wood

and leather, foster the growth of anything?" It is the English system of education which produces these inanimate Gerund-grinders. *Some* boys must be driven. Nothing else will make them learn anything. But these are of no account. It is utterly wrong to force boys to learn so much of this, and so much of that, for which they have literally no taste whatever, while at the same time no attention is paid to any bent that they may have in another direction. A man at Harrow once told me that a boy had said to him, "Why do you make me learn Euclid, sir? I can't understand him, and never will, and you tell me it is no use learning the stuff by heart. I would do much better learning chemistry," (for which he had a taste, a fact he proved very conclusively afterwards). "Now that fellow Euclid is awful; he goes ploughing through two or three pages of A's and B's and C's and triangles and circles, of which I can't make

head or tail, and then he finishes up by saying, 'Which is absurd,' and I knew it all the time."

Allan laughed at this, and said, 'Then if what you say is true, why on earth do people rush to get the vacant places?'

'Innes, you are an ass,' said Prettyman, quietly. 'Can't you see what these sort of men think?—what I myself thought. Here is money, solid, hard cash, *at once*, and a home. You see people of my sort are not overburdened with cash on leaving the university, and are only too glad of anything, absolutely anything, to prevent them from having to stay at home and burden still further an already overburdened household.'

Prettyman stopped suddenly and prodded the fire with his foot, and then got up and whistled.

After a few minutes Allan said,

'It sounds pretty hopeless, I must say. There must be a remedy, though.'

‘Remedy? Of course there is a remedy,’ broke in Prettyman. angrily, ‘the remedy for all evils—money. People don’t mind paying any price in or out of reason for anything of which they can see the tangible use—for food, for clothes, for nice houses, for comfort in general. How often you hear people say, “Oh, you can’t get anything good without paying for it,” and yet they pay those who shape the future rulers of the world worse than their butler. The schoolmaster must be a gentleman, they say, to look after their dear son’s manners, character, and his immortal soul. They will pay any price for their dear son’s clothes and his food and his pony, but for his moral and mental training as little as possible, and grumble at that. I am sick of it all, and yet I know I can’t get out of it. To grind and grind with no prospect of relief or improvement in one’s position, and get nothing but censure or the very faintest of faint praise,

until one rots in one's tracks. Ugh! I sometimes think of cutting the whole business, letting the whole bally-show go to mops and brooms as far as I am concerned, and then I know that it is hopeless, and I must stay.'

He stopped speaking, and went to the window and stood drumming on the panes with his fingers. Suddenly he said, as though to himself,

'And they complain that we are not enthusiastic enough. Good Lord! as if one could be enthusiastic about anything for fifty pounds a-year. Don't mind me, Innes, I don't often get like this, and it is foolish to cry out, but sometimes I can't help it.'

'Well,' said Allan, 'it seems awfully sad. I don't intend to become like that. This life is very jolly, don't you think, Prettyman?'

'Of course I do, in a way. That is the abominable thing about it. It is so beastly

pleasant and attractive for the first year or two. When I came here first I thought there was nothing like it in the world. They pay one well in comparison with other places of the stamp. The scenery is gorgeous. There is lots of sport to be had. The families round about are very hospitable. In fact, it is an ideal life. And yet if I had known all about it beforehand, I should never have gone to the 'Varsity, but I should have gone into business. I cannot rise above my present position. Oh, hang it! don't let us talk about it any more—where are you going at Christmas?’

‘I don't know.’

‘Don't you think we might do Llwyn Bridge again at Easter?’

‘The very thing,’ said Allan. ‘One can live practically for nothing there, and I should like to renew my acquaintance with those Usk trout. Thomas will ask us if I give him a hint.’

Twice during that term Allan had been

at the Vivians', once to dinner, and once when he had called afterwards. 'I mustn't go there very often,' he had said to himself. 'I might fall in love with Muriel, and that would do no one any good.'

Poor Allan, he was already hopelessly in love with her, only he did not know it, or, if he did, did not care to confess it to himself. It was chiefly owing to the fact that he felt that she was near, that he had enjoyed his first term at Llanwch so thoroughly.

CHAPTER IX.

‘ Deep as love,
 Deep as first love, and wild with all regret ;
 Oh, Death in life, the days that are no more.’

THE journey from Paddington to Rutland Gate is not very lively at the best of times, but, when it is accomplished in a dense fog on a bitterly cold afternoon in December, it is beyond all description abominable. After Allan had been driving for what seemed to him hours, he shouted up to the driver of the hansom,

‘ Where are we, cabby ?’

‘ Blest if I know, sir ; I thought I sighted Sloane Street just now, but it ain’t. Curse these fogs, anyhow. Come hup, Maria !’ (this to his horse). ‘ Here’s a Bobby, I’ll ask him.’

‘ Rutland Gate ?’ said the policeman.

‘Lor’ bless me, why, this *is* Rutland Gate. What number do you want?’

‘191,’ answered the cabby.

‘Why, ye’re at the very ’ouse; must be a bloomin’ fool,’ said the policeman.

The cabman replied that ‘’is eyes wasn’t made to see through a wall of pea-soup, and that it was all very well to stalk about in a blue coat and buttons and a ’elmet like a bally nautilus shell turned hupside down, and find yer way by crawlin’ along the railin’s; some people was mighty clever, but if ’e couldn’t——’

Here Allan interrupted the cabman, and asked him his fare.

The cabman got off his box and said,

‘Well, sir, the fare from Paddington is two bob, but’—here he took off his hat and scratched his head—‘I seem to ’ave been drivin’ the best part of a twelve-month; blest if I know what the time is, or whether it is night or day. Make it a bull, sir.’

Allan was just going to give him five shillings, when he suddenly remembered that he was no longer Allan Innes of St. Peter's, Oxford, gentleman at large, but Allan Innes of Llanweh, schoolmaster, so he said, 'Here's three shillings for you; that's double the fare, and it isn't my fault that you have lost the way.'

The cabby pocketed the money, mounted his box, and said, addressing his horse,

'Now then, Maria, come hup, old girl; you can bloomin' well take your own road home, I've 'ad enough drivin' for one afternoon.'

Allan was met on the stairs by Lady Grizel, who said,

'My dear Allan, how late you are. It's nearly eight, and you ought to have been here at half-past five. I have put off dinner half-an-hour. You needn't dress unless you like. General Ainslie is in the drawing-room, and I expect he is getting impatient.'

‘ I won’t be two minutes dressing, Lady Grizel.’

When he came down to the drawing-room, the general jumped up, offered his arm to Lady Grizel, and said to Allan,

‘ I wouldn’t have waited so patiently for my dinner for anybody else, young man.’

Allan took the general’s disengaged hand laughingly and pressed it, and they went down to dinner.

When the general had made quite certain that the soup was not spoiled by being kept waiting, he looked up at Allan, and said,

‘ Well, my dear lad, how do you like schoolmastering?’

‘ I think it quite charming where I am, general; it will do very well for a start. But I am sometimes afraid that I will get no further.’

‘ Yes, a little privation won’t do you much harm. You will appreciate the good things of life all the more when they

come. By gad, Lady Grizel, I shall never forget the first decent dinner I had after the Crimea. I was younger then. It consisted of about two pounds of beefsteak and two large bottles of Bass, and I wouldn't have changed places with any alderman at a City dinner.'

'I am happy enough,' said Allan. 'I am only sorry for my poor mother, who has to live in that beastly place, Edinburgh. I know she hates a town, and Edinburgh of all towns, with its society consisting of conceited legal prigs, is above all towns the least pleasant; but she says she must stay there, because of Jack, who is getting on very well, I believe.'

'Good boy is Jack,' said the general. 'I admired the way he buckled to his work. There's a great difference between sitting on a three-legged stool in a stuffy office and living in barracks, however dull they may be.'

Lady Grizel had had very strong objec-

tions to Allan's becoming a schoolmaster, but her objections had no effect. After the general had gone that night, she said to Allan,

‘You may smoke if you like, Allan, I am going to sit here and talk to you.’

‘I think I will, if I may,’ said Allan, and he filled and lit a pipe.

‘Now, Allan, I want you to listen to reason. I regard you, as you know, in the same light as if you were my son. I have hinted before, and I now tell you openly, that I did your uncle Alistair a great wrong. I loved him, and knew that he loved me, but my mother persuaded me that he did not care for me, that he led an evil life, and was no fit husband for me, and at the same time urged the claims of Somerton, whom I eventually married. You don't remember her, dear, I expect. She died very soon after you came here, and was, I think, only at Blairavon once. I now know that all her statements were

false. I am afraid, Allan, that I broke your uncle's heart, and—well, I paid the penalty. My life with Somerton was utterly miserable. Apart from the fact that I feel I ought to make some reparation, you know, Allan, that I love you very dearly, and for that reason I ask you to let me do something for you.'

'I know, dear Lady Grizel, that you are like a second mother to me, and for that very reason I do not want to take advantage of your goodness.'

'But, Allan, why do you become a schoolmaster? You can never stand the drudgery of it. You, who have been as free as air all your life, will never submit to be dependent upon the caprice of others. Besides, what does it lead to? As a schoolmaster you have no position. You are the despised of the despised. I should not mind if you were in one of the great public schools. The men there are in quite a different position. But at a wretched place

like Llanwch—why, I never heard of it until you wrote to say that you were going there.'

'But I am perfectly happy there, Lady Grizel, and if I find I am not getting on I will change to some other place. But the life is very jolly.'

He did not mention that the real reason that he liked it was that he had an opportunity of seeing and being near Muriel Vivian. Perhaps he did not even confess it to himself.

'You must not be angry with me, dear, at the proposal I am going to make. I want you to go to the Bar, as your father wished—now don't speak till I have finished. If you will let me allow you four hundred a year until you begin to get practice, you can pay me whenever you like, and you can be your own master, and not be tied down in the way you are at present.'

'My dear Lady Grizel, please don't

think me ungrateful, but I really cannot do this. At present I am at least dependent on no one. I can make enough money to live in comparative comfort, but if I go to the Bar, I may never make a single penny. Look how many men never make anything at all at the Bar. Now at least I have a competence, and although of course I should prefer to be a barrister, still I don't think I should be justified in incurring the risk.'

'Not even to please me, Allan?'

'If I saw any certain prospect of being able to pay you back, Lady Grizel, I should accept at once, but the prospect would be of the very vaguest description. I have proved conclusively at Oxford by my examinations that my brains are not of a first-class order, and how can I hope, under the circumstances, to do anything at the Bar?'

'If you have made up your mind, Allan, I suppose there is no hope of my changing

it. It is past one, I must go to bed—good-night, dear.’

Allan spent three happy weeks with Lady Grizel. At the end of the year he wrote to the Secretary of the Isthmian Club, of which he was a member, to say that he wished his name to be struck off the books. ‘I cannot afford to pay that subscription any longer,’ he said to himself, ‘especially as I shall be so little in town now.’ He received an answer to say that his subscription had been paid in advance for ten years. Under those circumstances Allan wrote to say that he would continue as a member. ‘I suppose that’s Lady Grizel’s doing or George’s, I can’t complain that I am devoid of friends.’

In the middle of January he was back at Llanweh, and the time passed quickly on till summer, when he found all his spare time occupied in going to dinners, and dances, and garden-parties, given by

the various families around Llanwch. He had been up to Llwyn Bridge in the previous spring with Prettyman again, but for some reason or another he did not enjoy it, as he had done on the previous occasion. In June he had a telegram from George telling him that a son and heir to Ardarrochar had been born. He found himself a frequent visitor at the Croft, the Vivians' house. He never missed an opportunity of going there, in order to bask in the sunshine of Muriel's society. Where had his good intentions gone to? His pleasure on the last occasion on which he had been there with Prettyman had been completely spoilt by the presence of an old school friend of Muriel's. As they came away from the house Allan said to Prettyman,

‘How on earth can Miss Vivian endure that fearful, coarse girl Miss Ventry? She is the complete opposite of Miss Vivian in every way.’

‘The very reason why Miss Vivian has her there,’ said Prettyman. ‘Women understand those things. The coarseness of Miss Ventry shows up Miss Vivian to advantage. I think she’s rather pretty.’

‘Who, Miss Ventry?’

‘No,’ roared Prettyman, ‘a woman with a voice like that could never be pretty. Features alone don’t constitute good looks in my opinion. It is the *tout ensemble* of a girl which makes up one’s idea of good-looking or nice. If she were condemned to everlasting silence, one might consider her pretty, but directly I hear her speak, everything but her terrible voice is driven from my mind, and I regard her with horror. It is curious too, because she sings really well. She was here last summer too.’

‘So you consider Miss Vivian rather pretty, do you?’ said Allan.

‘Yes, not bad, don’t you?’

‘I think she is far and away the most

beautiful girl I ever saw in my life ; and, moreover, she is as charming as she is beautiful.'

'Oho,' said Prettyman, 'does the wind still blow in that direction, Innes? I congratulate you again.'

'And I must ask you once more not to be an infernal ass.'

Towards the end of summer there was a dance at the Croft, and Allan was of course there. He felt that, in common decency, he must dance at least once with Miss Ventry, but he did not know whether it would be better to get it over at once or leave it till the end, in the hope that the programme might not be finished. He chose the latter course. He danced two or three times with Muriel, and was half glad, half piqued to find that she was apparently utterly indifferent to him. He told himself that he would be a villain if, in any way, he allowed her to care for him ; and following a plan, although his

heart leaped at the very sight of her, he always treated her with the same calm, studious politeness and respect with which he treated all women. His old Oxford friend, Thomas, was at the dance. Allan had not seen him since he had gone down, and when they met Thomas had said kindly enough, in his blunt way, that 'he was devilish sorry to hear of the bad luck that had happened to him, and that Allan could always depend on him to give him a lift if he ever had the opportunity.' It was kindly meant, and Allan thanked him, and liked him better than he had ever liked him before.

The time came for his dance with Miss Ventry. She was seated at an open window of the drawing-room, talking to her partner of the previous dance, who was fanning her. A shudder passed over Allan as he looked at her. He could hear her strident voice and her vulgar laugh. She was above the middle height, and had a

certain comeliness about her of the dairy-maid order. She had large, languishing brown eyes, and masses of brown hair curled and coiled in a wondrous manner on the top and back of her head, and a pouting, red under-lip to a voluptuous-looking mouth. Her hands and feet were large and well-made. She gave Allan the idea of a woman of vast size and strength with the passions of a gipsy. He turned as he was half across the room and looked towards the door through which Muriel, leaning on Thomas's arm, was just coming, and he made a mental comparison between the two. Muriel, though taller even than Miss Ventry, gave Allan the idea of all that was graceful, from her low, broad forehead to her dainty feet. Miss Ventry was simply repulsive to him. He turned with a sigh, and went up to her.

‘This is our dance, I think, Miss Ventry?’

She rose with alacrity, and bestowed a

bewitching glance on Allan ; which, however, was completely lost on him, since he, forgetting his manners, was gazing at Muriel. Miss Ventry bit her lip. She knew all about it. Her woman's eye had seen at once that Allan was in love with Muriel, and she had made up her mind that she would do all in her power to prevent anything from coming of it ; but she did not know that Allan had also made up his mind to the same thing. She had heard some garbled rumour of Allan's being heir to a beautiful place in Scotland, and she thought that her own person might fitly grace the position of mistress of it.

‘They will make a nice pair,’ she said to Allan.

‘Who?’ said Allan, with a start.

‘Muriel and Mr. Thomas. Haven't you heard? Oh, that is a very old affair indeed. I don't know that they are actually formally engaged, but it is a practically settled thing.’

Allan felt that he hated Thomas.

‘She sha’n’t marry that fiend,’ he said to himself. ‘It is too terrible to think of a pure, innocent girl being sacrificed to a beast like that.’ And again, ‘Well, it is no business of mine, after all. She is nothing to me, nor I to her.’—‘He doesn’t seem to be a very enthusiastic lover,’ said he, aloud; ‘this is the first time he has been here, since I came to Llanwch.’

‘He always spends the winter at Mentone or Monte Carlo. He is not very strong just now.’

After this Allan never spoke a word, despite all the wiles and blandishments of his partner. When the dance was over, Miss Ventry said,

‘You are very silent, Mr. Innes.’

‘I beg your pardon, I am afraid I have been horribly rude. I have a bad headache—I think I must go. Let me take you into the drawing-room. No? Good-night then.’

Allan walked back to Llanwch in the early morning, with no companion but his thoughts, and they were very bitter.

CHAPTER X.

‘The primrose path of dalliance.’

It is hard for a young man to be despondent for any length of time together. The elasticity of his nature forbids it, and so Allan, the day after the dance at the Croft, was as merry as ever, only Prettyman, who was very fond of him and took a deep interest in him, noticed that there was an undercurrent of sadness in his face and conversation, which was quite new to his nature. Allan had some idea of leaving Llanwch at the end of the term, fearing that he could not much longer prevent Muriel from seeing that he loved her, but on reflection he came to the conclusion

that there was no necessity for him to deprive himself of the pleasure of her society, since it was quite evident, to his own eyes at least, that she was completely indifferent to him.

‘What a conceited fool I am,’ he had said to himself, ‘to suppose that she would even give two thoughts to me. It is easy to see that we men are tolerated by her father as very good fellows in our way, but I expect he would have a fit if anyone were to suggest that we were in any way his equals. I have so far at any rate subdued my passion, as to prevent it from appearing openly.’

He had broached the subject of his leaving Llanwch to Prettyman earlier in the term.

‘My dear Innes,’ said Prettyman, ‘you would be absolutely mad to leave now. Why, you have only been here one year, and you would find it uncommonly hard

to get another place. Everyone would think that you had gone from some fault of your own, however good your testimonials might be. It would be sheer madness. If I were you I should stay on here at least three years, and then you might have a chance of something better. There is no knowing what may happen. It is true that there are only two higher posts than yours in this place to look forward to, and you are the junior man, but still I fancy the rector might possibly pass over the senior men for you when Thomas and Barry resign. The rector looks with a very favourable eye upon you, Innes, for some reason or other, I can't make out why.'

Allan smiled and said,

'I daresay you are right, Prettyman.'

He did not let Prettyman know that it was no question of pecuniary gain or loss which made him suggest leaving. In fact

no one even guessed at Allan's secret, and he made up his mind that no one ever should.

At the end of the term he went straight up to Ardarrochar. His mother and Lord and Lady Maginnis were there before him. Jack was to come down for the 12th for his three weeks' holiday from the bank. Mrs. Innes was the mere wreck of her former self. It was evident that she tried hard to bear-up and show a bold front to her sorrow; but it was hard. She found little pleasure in anything save the company of her children.

'My darling,' she said to Allan on his arrival, 'I am so thankful to see you again; I am afraid my heart is weak, and I am always afraid that I shan't see you again.'

'That is only fancy, mother dear, we shall all live happily together again at Blairavon, I hope.'

George greeted him heartily.

‘Your new life seems to agree with you, Allan. You look as well as it is possible for anyone to look.’

‘By Jove, this is just like coming home again,’ said Allan. ‘You are very kind to me, George. Ah, here’s Amy with the wonderful baby.’

Amy came in carrying her infant in her arms, a mother’s tender love beaming in her soft brown eyes, as she bent over the sleeping child. Allan kissed her, and she said,

‘Don’t speak loud, Allan dear, in case you might waken him. George and I want you to be his godfather. He is exactly like you. Isn’t he beautiful?’

‘Well, Amy dear, if he is like me, he isn’t beautiful.’

‘Oh, Allan.’

‘And,’ went on Allan, laughing, ‘if I am like that, I am a great deal uglier than I thought I was.’

He then saw that his sister had taken

what he said seriously, so he kissed her tenderly again, and added,

‘Don’t be angry, dear. I will be his godfather, and I will do everything in the world I can for him, if it should ever be necessary.’

Allan had not seen Lord Maginnis since his father’s death, and as he was going to his room to dress for dinner he met him in the corridor. Maginnis stretched out his hand and said,

‘I am well aware, Allan, that words of condolence always sound unmeaning, but I can assure you that I have felt for you in your trouble more than I can express in words.’

‘Thank you, Maginnis,’ said Allan, as he wrung his hand. He passed on to his room, and forgot all about Maginnis’s lisp, his watery eyes, weak knees, and eyeglass, and he said to himself, ‘I have been a fool as usual, I have been mistaken in him all

my life. I am certain he meant what he said, and he is a good soul.'

Allan dressed for dinner, and, feeling happy again at being among his own people, he began to sing as he dressed; an old habit of his, which he had dropped lately. Just as he finished dressing, the gong sounded, and he reached the drawing-room at the same time as the butler intent on announcing dinner. He was an old friend of Allan's.

'Plenty of time, sir; her ladyship is not down yet.'

George and his sister Mildred were the only two occupants of the drawing-room.

'Here is Allan, Mildred.'

'We haven't met in this room, Mildred, since you were married.'

'No,' said Mildred. 'I hope that the next time we meet here you will be married too, Allan.'

Allan blushed and said,

‘That is equivalent to wishing that you may never see me again. I don’t think it is at all likely that I shall ever marry.’

‘What nonsense, Allan,’ said George. ‘Ah, here is your mother and Amy. Take in Mildred, Allan. Come, Mrs. Innes.’

At dinner George said to Lord Maginnis, ‘I haven’t asked anyone for the 12th, Maginnis. I hope you won’t mind such a small party.’

‘I am very glad of it, George. Four of us—you say Jack Innes is coming down—are quite enough to shoot the moor for the first fortnight.’

They rode, and drove, and played lawn-tennis, and pottered about in the glorious August sunshine until the 11th, when Jack came down, now changed from a rollicking schoolboy into a rather sad-looking, gaunt youth of eighteen. Allan met him at the station.

‘You don’t look particularly fit, Jack,’ said Allan fondly to him.

‘ No, I have had to sit up till eleven and twelve and sometimes one in the morning for the last fortnight. They work us tremendously hard; there are not nearly enough clerks. However, three weeks here will soon set me up again. How jolly it is to get into the country again, after being cooped up in that filthy hole Edinburgh.’

As they bowled along the road from the station, and turned into the lodge-gates of Ardarrochar, Jack snuffed in the beautiful evening air, and said, with a sigh,

‘ Ah, this is better than an office-stool. I almost feel at times that I am not really alive in Edinburgh, that I am a mere writing and calculating machine.’

‘ Two or three days on the hills among the grouse will soon drive that away, Jack. Do you want to change your work?’

‘ Oh, no, I am getting on all right in the bank. The manager is very kind to me, and I daresay I shall rise steadily but slowly. Oh, bother the bank, I am going

to put it out of my head for three weeks. There's old M'Evoy' (M'Evoy had gone to Ardarrochar after Richard Innes's death, refusing to serve under anyone but an Innes at Blairavon). 'How are you, M'Evoy?' said Jack. 'Lots of birds?'

'Ay, sir, but I'm gey and glad tae see ye. Ow ay, there's a wheen burrd, gin' ye've no forgot the way to coup them ower.'

'We'll see to-morrow, M'Evoy. Good-night.'

M'Evoy watched them drive on to the house, then he took off his hat, with a puzzled look, and shook his head, and said,

'There's twa bonnie laddies wha didna ought tae be warkin' in schools and banks, and sic like trash. Appears tae me that the auld faimilies is a' gane the wrang gait thegither noo-a-days. We hae cotton-spinners frae Manchester, and bow-leggit, lood-voiced horse-cowpers frae Glesca' i'

the auld hooses. I dinna unnerstan' it. It's no recht onywise.'

Jack's holidays are over. A host of guests have come to shoot driven grouse, and gone, and it is the day before Allan must go back to Llanwch. In the afternoon his mother and he were sitting alone in the library, and discussing whether it would not be better to sell all the wood at Blairavon, and so raise enough money to farm the land thus redeemed, and enable them to live at Blairavon once more. Allan was against it.

'I don't like to see you toiling away at that terrible drudgery, Allan dear, when you might do something much better and more remunerative.'

'But, my dear mother, I like it, I really like it; you all seem to think that I am a martyr, when, if it weren't for the miserable pay, I am doing work which I thoroughly enjoy. It is impossible to do

anything better, unless one has capital.'

'I am sure that there is some foul play at the bottom of that Black Hawk business in Australia, Allan. I never trusted Mr. Reid from the first, but your dear father's implicit confidence in him lulled my suspicion, and I almost believed in him, but now I am sure that he is responsible in some way or other for the loss of all that money.'

'Well, mother, I don't think there is anything to be done.'

'Did you ever notice his eyes, Allan? Horrid shifty eyes. He could never look anyone in the face. I wish, oh, how I wish we had some trustworthy agent in Australia to look after the matter.'

'It would be quite useless, mother, unless we could prove actual cheating on his part. He had a power of attorney, you see. His letter said merely that the Black Hawk had ceased yielding gold.'

Mrs. Innes sighed, and said,

‘I shall never rest content until some real investigation is made.’

‘Perhaps I shall go out some day, though I don’t think it would be of any use whatsoever. I think we had much better let the matter rest.’

Although Allan said this to calm his mother’s misgivings, in his heart he confessed that something was wrong, and had a firm intention of going out to Australia some day.

Despite the fact that he had spent such a happy time at Ardarrochar, it was with joy that he got into the train to go to Llanwch once more. He was in a very curious frame of mind at this time. He alternately cursed himself for being such a fool as to cherish love for an object, which he knew in his heart of hearts was unattainable, and blessed the kind gods that he was allowed to see and speak to the only girl whom he ever cared to see twice again. You will see that Allan was on

very dangerous ground. He was constantly balancing himself on the edge of a precipice, and trusting entirely to his own power of will to prevent himself from falling over. He had said to himself, 'I will follow Colonel Newcome's advice and present my back to the enemy when the time comes'; but then he also said, 'The time has not yet come; so long as she does not care for me, I am safe as far as my own feelings are concerned.' Even as he was thinking thus, he was finding the journey down to Llanwch awfully long and wearisome. He calculated the chances of seeing her to-morrow, the next day, at any rate on Sunday in church. A very foolish person, Allan; he would have done better to fly at once, rather than give himself so much unnecessary pain. The bitter sweetness of the present could only be turned into never-ending bitterness at last. And yet—it is very easy for a looker-on to be

wise, but who can lay down laws and regulations for a young man in love ?

Allan had to wait till Sunday before his opportunity came. He went to morning-service—a thing he rarely did. As he walked to church he was maligning himself in every way he could think of.

‘ You are a pretty sort of an ass, I think,’ he said to himself, ‘ to go tramping to church to endure an hour-and-a-half from that awful vicar. I suppose it will be the same old subject—eternal damnation. Well, I may see Muriel, possibly catch her eye, get a bow from her, even a word with her if that old hawk Sir Lionel Pauncefoote, who is staying somewhere about here, is not near. I believe that the old fiend would marry her, if he could. He usually monopolizes her when he has a chance. He has a title and thirty thousand a-year. He is a worn-out, broken-down old *roué*, but with his new teeth and

his stays he might pass for sixty. Ugh! They can't think of allowing him to marry her.'

You will see that Allan had no intention of asking Muriel to marry him, and yet he had every intention of preventing anyone else from doing so, all of which is known as acting like a dog-in-the-manger. Fortune smiled on him to-day. Sir Lionel had a fit of the gout, which he called a sprained foot. Mr. Vivian stayed to talk to the vicar on parish matters, telling Muriel he would catch her up on the way home. Mrs. Vivian was confined to the house. When Allan came out into the warm autumn sunshine after church, he not only saw Muriel but also had the pleasure of escorting her along the road towards her home.

'Why have you honoured church with a visit this morning, Mr. Innes? You don't often patronize it in the morning.'

'I hardly know, Miss Vivian. It was a

nice morning, and I got up early, and I said I would go to church.' (Oh ! Allan.)

' Not that I like it.'

' Why don't you like it ?'

' Well, I am afraid it is from a selfish point of view. I cannot recognise that public worship of that sort can do anyone any good. All those farmers and servants go because their fathers went before them, not because they want to worship. If the music were good, it might touch their hearts. If the sermon were good it might possibly reach them. If the service were not droned out in that "let's-get-it-over-as-quickly-as-possible" tone, it might affect them. To my mind, a sermon like that we have or have not listened to to-day is an insult to one's intelligence. There is nothing attractive or reverent in the service. Religion should be made attractive in itself, if it is to be in public.'

' I had no idea that you thought in that

way, Mr. Innes : people say that you are completely indifferent.'

'No, I am not indifferent, Miss Vivian. There are some men who have the power to move my very soul. I have heard a man in a little village in Perthshire preach for an hour, with the most perfect, simple eloquence I have ever listened to. He kept his audience, and me among the number, spell-bound, and I was sorry when it was over. If he were in England they might make him a bishop. There he will stay probably till he dies. A man like that ought to be brought into the large towns, and given a church which would hold as many persons as could hear him speak : Spurgeon, I believe, had the same power. There is a Scotch Independent minister who is as good, but a little rough—but they are few. People don't admire the word of God in itself—they admire the way in which it is offered

to them. Music, people will tell you, appeals only to the senses, but then is not soul merely a refinement of sense ?’

‘How would you remedy the matter, Mr. Innes ?’

‘I would make every clergyman prove not only that he could preach well, but also that he had the power of attraction. It is the *man* who is worshipped in church. A man can become a clergyman now and get a good living by favour, if he can cram up enough doctrinal points to satisfy an examiner. It is apparently unimportant that he should possess any of the qualities for teaching men. What I feel about so many clergymen is that they are not really sincere. They seem to me to regard their work as a business at which they can make money, if successful, if not they can throw up their hands to heaven and say, “It is God’s will,” and at the same time pray that the congregation will give liberally towards

the augmentation of their stipend—now I have shocked you, Miss Vivian, and here comes your father.’

‘ You haven’t shocked me in the least, Mr. Innes, and I am very certain that most people misjudge you entirely.’

‘ How d’ye do, Innes, had a good time in Scotland ?’

‘ We had pretty good sport, thank you, Mr. Vivian, among the grouse, but we had very few partridges, they were all drowned in the June floods.’

‘ Better come up and have a day with us next Saturday, and dine with us afterwards.’

‘ I can’t get off until ten, but if I may come then I shall be delighted.’

‘ Certainly.’

Allan took off his hat, had a bow and a gentle smile from Muriel, and went back to his rooms treading on air. Poor fool!

CHAPTER XI.

‘The moral deterioration that follows an empty exchequer.’

ALLAN had his day’s shooting, but as Muriel and her mother had gone to London for a fortnight, he voted it the slowest day he had ever spent, and moreover he shot abominably badly.

One cold, wet afternoon in November, Allan, Wilson, and Prettyman were taking tea in Bright’s room. They were very silent: the fire was burning brightly, and Allan was looking with admiration at a beautiful Sèvres china tea-pot which Bright was holding in his hand, preparatory to pouring out tea. A knock came at the door, and their maid-of-all-work brought in

a letter for Allan. He opened it, laughed, and threw it into the fire, and said,

‘The last of my Oxford bills. At the end of next term I shall be free from them entirely. I shall pay half of that this term and half next, and then I shall be square, thank goodness.’

Wilson sighed, and in his thin little voice said,

‘I wish I could say the same. I went down thirteen years ago, owing a little over four hundred pounds, and I still owe over a hundred, though I have paid five hundred and sixty for those four hundred already since I have been here.’

‘It’s a cruel, monstrous shame,’ broke in Prettyman, angrily.

At this point Bright took up a book of problems and began to work at it.

‘Shall we go, Bright?’ said Prettyman.

The ogreish face broke into a soft, sweet smile, became childlike, and Bright said,

‘No, don’t go. You can talk as much

as you like. I shan't hear you when I am working at this book.'

'What a wonderful thing it is to be a mathematician,' said Allan.

'I say it is a cruel and monstrous shame,' said Prettyman, 'that such a thing should be tolerated as the system of credit at the universities. It is the cause of the ruin of hundreds of men. I will tell you men what I have never told anyone before. You know I had an elder brother, Innes. He was a parson, getting on well in his parish. He had got into debt at Oxford about a hundred pounds. He paid off twenty pounds or so a year, until he had paid about a hundred and fifty pounds, and still there was more to pay. The interest seemed to be never-ending. At last he thought it was finished. He was a happy man once more. He had made up his mind to ask a certain lady to marry him. On the very day on which he was going to propose to her, a bill came in for

thirty pounds with interest at ten per cent. for six years, which he had utterly forgotten. It broke his heart, he committed suicide that same day. Now you know, Innes, why I never ran into debt in Oxford.'

Allan said nothing.

'I seem,' said Wilson, very quietly, 'never to get to the end of mine either. I pay and pay, and yet there is always more. I have lost all hopes of ever seeing the end of them now.'

There were signs of uneasiness in Bright's feet, and Allan quickly moved his chair out of range.

'It is a cursed, damnable shame,' said Prettyman.

'What is?' said Allan.

'Why, the credit system, of course,' said Prettyman, angrily. 'Two-thirds of the men who leave Oxford and Cambridge start life with a load round their necks, which some of them never shake off. It

is not their own fault. How many boys of eighteen have the heads of men on their shoulders? They see they can get a thing by merely going into a shop and ordering it. They are encouraged not to pay. For a very good reason, that the cash price, absurdly high as it is in Oxford, is ten per cent. below the price of the article if it is put in the books: and when a man has gone down ten per cent. more is added. It is iniquitous. Not one man in a hundred takes the matter into court and refuses to pay the exorbitant interest, because he knows very well that to have his name figuring in the police-court news, be he innocent or guilty, is enough to damn him for ever for his profession, whatever it may be. And so it goes on. If you were to examine a man's debts when he leaves the university, you would find that the greater part of them have been contracted in the early part of his career and not at the end.'

‘That is true enough in my case,’ said Allan, and Wilson sighed again and nodded his head.

‘He learns wisdom when too late. Credit ought to be prohibited by statute at the university. If only one or two of the first-rate tradesmen would vow that they will sell nothing except for cash, they would soon have their reward. Their defence at present is that they have to charge high prices and high rates of interest because of their bad debts. They have very few altogether bad debts. And they would, of course, have none if they insisted upon cash. It would make the life there, too, less artificial; there would be no crows strutting in peacocks’ feathers then. Every undergraduate at the university is for the time being, at any rate, a gentleman by position.’

Allan laughed, and said,

‘You talk just as if you were scanning

a line of Homer, Prettyman. € long—no, gentleman by position.'

'That's just what I did mean to say. Don't interrupt, Innes. Many men are not contented to be mere gentlemen by position. They wish to be rich gentlemen, and to show it in their clothes. There are many abuses at the great seats of learning, but that is the greatest. It leads to lying and deceit at home. A father asks his son if he is in debt, and the son answers, "Oh, yes, a few pounds," mentioning a sum he can easily pay out of his allowance. The father, remembering his own youth, probably gives him a cheque for double the amount, and advises him to keep within his income for the future. The son may or may not pay off a few pounds' worth of debt with this money, but he votes the governor a "brick," and gives a champagne dinner to his friends on the rest of it. The system is sinful, criminal, and

ought to be abolished at once. I know that there are people who say that the experience is good for a young man, and will teach him economy in the future. I utterly deny it. They might as well say that the fact that the Duke of Westminster's having had a thousand pounds a-day for twenty years will teach him the way to live on fifty pounds a-year as a clerk in the City. The system at the universities teaches a man extravagance, and it takes him years of his life to get out of the habit of hankering after what he cannot get, because he had it for the mere asking at the university. There is no other place in the world where you can go into a shop and say, "Give me this, and that, and see that you send it up at once. Snooks of Merton is my name." Snooks of Merton may have been ordering cigars at eighty shillings a hundred, and artists' proofs at forty guineas a-piece, on an allowance of one hundred and eighty pounds per annum.

What does that matter? The shopman probably knows that Snooks is going to take orders, and must pay eventually to save his name, and so he is content to wait. He can afford to wait. He has paid forty shillings a hundred for the cigars, and he gets ten per cent. interest, on eighty shillings a hundred. No bad investment. The shopkeepers don't want cash. They prefer to book a thing. They know it is a safe investment in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred. They can get ten per cent. for their money nowhere else. They are in consequence uncommonly glad to book a thing, get ten per cent. for an indefinite period, and finally the original debt in full; and he stopped, with a snort of rage.

'I quite agree with you, Prettyman,' said Allan. 'But it is hopeless to attempt to remedy it, I am afraid. It is too deeply rooted there now to be eradicated save by statute, and I daresay they would get

round that, even. The tradesmen could do it, but they won't. It is against their ultimate interest to establish a cash system, say what they will to the contrary.'

'I only wish such a statute had been in force in my time,' said Wilson, in a weary voice. 'I should have been a happier man. After all, one only has oneself to blame; but it is hardly fair, as Prettyman says, to expect a boy of eighteen to have the head of a man upon his shoulders;' and he sighed again.

Bright here rose, took up his tea-pot, looked at it critically, and making a hole in the red ashes of his fire, carefully deposited the tea-pot in their midst. It cracked and broke into a thousand pieces at once. Allan jumped up from his chair with a cry, and said,

'What on earth did you do that for, Bright?'

'I was tired of it,' answered Bright, with a cherubic smile.

Wilson piped out,

‘ I think Bright is getting dangerous, we had better go.’

When they were outside, Allan said to Prettyman,

‘ What an extraordinary person Bright is.’

‘ It was Wilson’s fault,’ said Prettyman. ‘ Bright has a very soft heart, and he has the greatest pity for Wilson, whom he is very fond of, and he can’t bear to see him in a despondent condition, so he burnt his tea-pot to relieve his feelings.’

‘ But he said he shouldn’t hear anything that was said.’

‘ He always listens when Wilson speaks,’ said Prettyman.

‘ Well, I wish he had given me the tea-pot. I would have lent him something else to burn,’ answered Allan. ‘ I shall always be glad I became a schoolmaster, Prettyman, if only for the reason that it has shown me some very curious samples of the species at Llanwch.’

One has no patience with Allan at this time. He was playing with fire, and assuring himself that he would not be burnt. He was laying up for himself a store of agony of which he little dreamed. He trusted his own strength, not having any knowledge of the power of his adversary, Love. Love which, as an adversary, is stronger than all the powers of hell. As a friend, ah! yes, as a friend as strong as Death. He felt sure that he could forget Muriel as soon as he left Llanwch, he preferred to stay on and on and enjoy the few opportunities he had of her society, and to have the feeling that he was near her to protect her, just as though any protection that he might offer would be of any avail. He had been told and almost believed that she was going to marry Thomas, and he was going to prevent it if he could. But how? The only way in which he could prevent it was to make her transfer her affections from Thomas to himself. Yet

he was continually telling himself that he would be a villain, if he allowed her to think for a moment that he was in love with her, or in any way tried to turn the current of her affections towards himself. He was young and therefore foolish, and that is the only excuse that can be found for him. He was content to shut his eyes to the future, and enjoy the sunshine of the present. If he had only known of the awful torments of unrequited affection, he would probably have turned and fled from Llanwch, as from a pestilence. But no, he said, in his folly,

‘I will go when I feel that it is time; besides, Prettyman tells me it would be foolish to go at present.’

(How easy it is to bolster up a feeble excuse.) Prettyman had said so, it is true, but then he did not know of the chain which bound him to Llanwch: if he had, possibly he too would have advised flight. Prettyman thought that it was

merely the restlessness born of youth and enthusiasm which made Allan so eager to go at the end of the previous term. After all, Allan's eagerness was only feigned. It was the last feeble effort to conquer himself.

He now made up his mind to stay until a better opportunity offered. He, alone, was going to fight the demon of Love which was clawing at his heart and sapping his very vitals; we shall see who won in the end.

He had said to himself that there was no harm in his being in love, that it did him good: it took him out of himself, made him work harder. He had not yet learned that, in his position, he might work till his eyes grew dim and his heart was sore with patient waiting, and that it would profit him nothing. He was learning many things, but his lesson was not yet perfect. He argued with himself, 'If I work I must succeed. There is nothing

like work.' But this was merely a sop to his conscience.

If the matter was reduced down to solid, dry fact, it resolved itself into this—that Allan was content to waste some of the best years of his life, in order that he might look at, possibly speak to, a lady who could be nothing to him. Her mother was entirely a woman of the world; her father, according to Prettyman, ready to sell her to the highest or noblest bidder. Allan did not think this of him himself, but he knew that he naturally expected his daughter to marry well. Nay more, Muriel herself had probably been trained to this idea all her life. So Allan lingered, poor silly moth; like all other moths he said, 'The light is sweet, I will fly round it; I shall not burn my wings.' And lo! soon they say, 'I am undone; my wings are burnt, and I am like to die.'

The curious thing was that no one ever dreamed of the battle that was raging in

Allan's heart. He showed no outward symptoms of the disease that was slowly consuming him within. He had a marvellous power of controlling his features and his voice, which served to blind others as to the true state of the case.

He had seen Thomas several times since the previous June. Thomas showed the same friendship as he had shown at Oxford, until one day when he had come down to say 'Good-bye' to the Vivians, previous to his departure to Mentone for the winter. It was about a month before the events related in the beginning of this chapter.

Allan and Wilson had called at the Croft, and stayed to afternoon-tea. In the middle of it Thomas came in, and saw at one end of the room Muriel bending over an illustrated book of British butterflies; Allan was standing beside her, explaining that the colouring of the Painted Lady was all wrong, according to the one he had

seen. Muriel had just raised her head, and was looking up into Allan's face when Thomas advanced into the room. In an instant his brow contracted, and his little, red, ferret-like eyes assumed a look of concentrated hate, which it was as well Allan did not see. It was only for an instant. The next moment Thomas, with a bland smile, was holding out his hand to Mrs. Vivian. He greeted Allan rather coolly, and, when Allan asked him if he might go up to Llwyn Bridge to fish the Usk again next spring, Thomas put him off, first saying that he had promised it to another man, and then that he thought of giving it a rest for the first half of the season ; all of which was unintelligible to Allan. This sudden coldness after such warm previous expressions of friendship struck him as odd. This was merely the beginning of a silent strife which was to end disastrously for at least one of the combatants.

‘ You must come butterfly-hunting with me one day in summer, Mr. Innes,’ said Muriel.

‘ I shall only be too delighted if I may, Miss Vivian, but I am afraid I don’t know much about it.’

‘ Then we can learn together, I don’t know anything about it either. It will be something to relieve the monotony of one’s life here. You men have much the best of it. You have some definite occupation every day, while I have nothing, except when Lily Ventry comes. I am going to make her stay from May to August this year.’

Allan thought that he would like to spend the rest of his natural existence in catching butterflies with Muriel, and he also consigned Miss Ventry, inwardly of course, to a warmer clime.

That night he told Prettyman that Miss Ventry was coming again in the summer.

‘ What *can* Miss Vivian see in that

terrible woman. I don't believe in your theory that she has her there as a "set off" to herself. She is much too innocent and modest to dream of such a thing.'

'H'm,' said Prettyman, 'your ingenuousness is interesting, Innes, and as for Miss Ventry, I should advise her to try "fresh fields and pastures new." She is somewhat past her prime, and I expect is anxious to get settled in life.'

'Well, it don't matter to me anyhow,' said Allan, 'but I must say I can't stand her.'

Autumn at Llanwch, lying as it did among wooded hills, was very beautiful, and Allan and Prettyman used, on many Sundays, to wander over the hills, talking at times of everything in heaven and earth, at others, silently striding side by side, each wrapped in his own thoughts.

Autumn wore into winter, and Allan found himself again travelling up to London on a visit to Lady Grizel. He was

now in a state of complete indifference to the future. He had made up his mind to let things slip along as they had been doing. He had said to himself,

‘I have kept my own counsel for fifteen months, why should I not keep it for ever?’

CHAPTER XII.

*‘Aequam memento, rebus in arduis,
Servare mentem.’*

ALLAN found his mother at Rutland Gate. She had been staying there for more than a month, Jack being left alone in Edinburgh. A fortnight before Allan's arrival there had been a great conclave at Lady Grizel's house, between Lady Grizel, Mrs. Innes, General Ainslie, and George, the result of which was that Allan was to give up schoolmastering, that most of the wood at Blairavon was to be cut and sold, that Allan was to go back to Blairavon and farm the whole place himself. The old house was to be occupied with the exception of the two new wings. George was

going to make over five thousand pounds to him, the amount of Amy's jointure. This was to be done by a pious fraud. George was going to explain that there was a clause in Amy's marriage settlement to the effect that, in the event of Richard Innes's children being left unprovided for, the five thousand pounds given to Amy was to be returned, subject to George's approval. It was thin, horribly thin, but they could not devise anything better. All this was to come into force in the following August, when Allan had completed two years at Llanwch. They calculated that with the profits from the sale of the timber, and this money, and the profits from farming, Allan ought to make about eight hundred pounds a year. George had said that Allan would be more likely to concede to this plan at the end of two years schoolmastering, when he would be beginning to see the hopelessness of

the business, and would in consequence be more amenable to reason.

The general said that it was 'uncommonly good of George to behave in this way, and that, by Jove! he respected him for it.'

'I don't see it at all, general. I am a wealthy man. I cannot spend my income in the way we are living now, and I see no reason why the money which rightly belongs to Allan should not go to him. When Mr. Innes made the marriage settlement, he made it under the impression that he was a rich man, and could afford to do so; but he couldn't have done so now, if he had lived.'

'Quite so,' said the general. 'I honour you for it; but it isn't the way of the world by a very long way. I don't think that there are many men who would do it. The money is legally yours.'

'Legally it is, general; but in equity it

is not. Besides, it is no sacrifice on my part. It is my wife's money, and it is at her express wish that I am doing this.'

Allan was, of course, utterly unconscious of this little plot that had been so carefully hatched, and which was to be carried into effect in the following autumn.

In reply to Lady Grizel's questionings about Llanwch, Allan rather beat about the bush. He seemed to be very fond of the place, and yet to be dissatisfied. Lady Grizel did not understand it. She thought that there was something under the surface, and yet she did not know what it was. However, she consoled herself with the fact that it would be soon over.

It was with feelings of intense joy that Allan turned his face away from London, and sped away down to Llanwch once more.

Despite the affection that he had for Lady Grizel, there was a lodestone at Llanwch which he felt could draw him

from the nethermost parts of the earth. He arrived—and found to his dismay that Mrs. Vivian and Muriel had gone to Bournemouth for three months, as Muriel was not well.

What a miserable, wet, dull, uninteresting place Llanwch was. Allan found himself even complaining of the mountains. His work became distasteful to him. He found the boys annoying, and life generally unbearable.

‘What’s the matter with you, Innes?’ said Prettyman to him in the middle of term. ‘You seem to have lost all your “go” and spirit.’

‘Oh, nothing,’ said Allan. ‘I don’t think I am very well, this continual damp weather doesn’t agree with me at all. I wish the summer would come.’

‘You’ve got the blues,’ said Prettyman. ‘To-morrow is a half-holiday; let’s take train up the line to Dyllyn, and walk back over the hills.’

‘Right you are,’ said Allan.

The next day they went up to Dyllyn, and when they got on to the hills on the way home, Allan’s animal spirits returned, and they began talking of Oxford and old college friends—how So-and-So had come to grief over a woman, and somebody else had been shot out in Texas, and finally Prettyman told Allan how he had met Atherley in a billiard-saloon in London. He was acting as marker, and Prettyman had gathered some disjointed information from him about debt—Alice Wallis of the Frivolity—governor furious, etc.—Atherley was a mere sot now, etc.

‘By gad, that’s a sad tale,’ said Allan; and then he began to rage against the usages of society in general, and the iniquity of sham marriages in particular. He gave Prettyman a general survey of a perfect system of marriage, at which Prettyman scoffed, and said,

‘But, Innes, I am afraid your system

would hardly work. Look how many failures there are in marriage now.'

'Of course there are failures,' said Allan, warmly, 'because those which you refer to are mere bargains and not marriages. Unequal marriages, too, are just as bad—a man of long descent with a millionaire grocer's daughter, and *vice-versâ*.'

'But the worn-out blood of the aristocracy wants recruiting at times, Innes.'

'Fiddlesticks! Worn-out blood!—why, you might just as well talk about the worn-out blood of race-horses. Is a racer mated with a Clydesdale in order to improve the breed of race-horses?'

'You are quite right, Innes; I was only drawing you. You have a good many hobbies, old man, and it is amusing to see you mount and ride them at full gallop. We are all more or less frauds—like Dickens's Marchioness—in that we can "make believe" a good deal.'

‘ Do you remember Castello, Prettyman?’

‘ By name, well ; he was much junior to me.’

‘ I shall never forget him on the subject of marriage. You know what a curious voice he had? We had been having a tremendous argument on the point one night in Ingersoll’s rooms, and Castello had been listening very intently all the time ; suddenly some one asked him what he thought about it. He looked up with that innocent smile of his and said, “ Considering that marriage has produced such a wonderfully ugly, uninteresting, and stupid person as myself, I consider it a great mistake.” ’

‘ By the way, Innes, are we on the right road? We ought to be about five miles off Llanwch, and I don’t seem to recognise any of the country about. Here comes a man, we’ll ask him.’

‘ Could you tell us if we are on the right road to Llanwch?’ said Allan.

The man looked at them with an utterly expressionless face, and said, 'Dim Saes-neg,' and was going to pass on.

'Here, that won't do. Llanwch. Thlaaan-ooch! Is this the road to Llanwch?' bawled Allan.

The man shook his head, and then Prettyman said,

'Of course he only knows the Welsh word for it. It is something like Kam-schatka. Ah, I have it.'

The man's face broke into a slow smile, as much as to say, 'Why the deuce didn't you say that before?' and then proceeded to explain that they were on the wrong road presumably, when Prettyman produced a shilling and beckoned to him. At least he understood that language, and went with them and showed them the right road.

About ten minutes after the man had left them they came round a very sharp turn. The road was cut out of the side of

the hill, and one bank sloped down to the river some hundred feet below, with no protecting wall. Just as they came round the corner they saw a pair of grey cobs, in a small waggonette, tearing along the road at a terrible pace. A man on the box was doing all he could to pull them in. To no avail. They had fairly bolted. Allan and Prettyman ran hard about fifty yards along the road, and then stood and shouted and waved their hands. The cobs slackened speed on seeing them, and Allan grasped the reins of one, and Prettyman of the other. On looking to see who was the occupant of the box-seat they saw it was Mr. Vivian, as pale as death and shaking. He did not speak for a moment. Soon he gave a gulp, and, turning to Allan, said,

‘Thank you, gentlemen; if you had not been exactly where you were, I should have been a dead man now. I could never have kept the waggonette on the

road at that corner, and should have been dashed to pieces on the rocks below. I think the ponies are quiet enough now. Will you drive with me? I was going further, but I don't feel much inclined to now. Harris, my coachman, is at the inn along the road there. He got out to water the horses, when a young fiend of a boy came out beating a tin can. That startled them, and you know the rest. I have not seen much of you two lately: will you come and dine with me to-morrow night?'

All this had been said as they were driving back to the inn, where they found Harris thrashing the small boy, who still held the tin can. He had first run after the carriage, but, on seeing it stopped, he turned to vent his wrath on the innocent cause of the mishap.

After this Mr. Vivian had Allan and Prettyman to dine with him very often, and a strong regard for Allan sprang up in Mr. Vivian's breast.

The rest of the term passed off pleasantly enough, and at the end of it Allan, having no opportunity of fishing in Wales, and having paid off all his Oxford debts, went up to Edinburgh to stay with his mother for the Easter holidays.

CHAPTER XIII.

‘Thy fate and mine are sealed,
I strove against the stream, and all in vain.’

THEY say that before any great misfortune happens to anybody, a period of tranquillity always comes. This is open to doubt. One *may* think on looking back that the period before any such event was, in comparison to the present misery, so supremely happy as to be considered unattainable again, and to be remembered with fond regret. It was certainly with no sense of impending calamity that Allan came back to his duties at Llanwch at the beginning of the summer term of 1887. During the holidays he had fought his last great battle with himself, and thought that he had won.

He had finally and completely made up his mind to leave Llanwch at the end of that term, and, moreover, he had made up his mind also to see as little of Muriel as possible. He had told no one of his intentions, nor did he mean to until the term was over. Certainly luck was against him in one way. What I mean is that after his adventure with Mr. Vivian in the previous term, his presence at the Croft was exceedingly welcome, and in the first fortnight of term he had no less than three invitations to go there, all of which he resolutely but politely refused. Each refusal was like putting a knife into his own vitals. But he won, and felt that he had done his duty, though it must be confessed that he did not feel happy in his victory so far. During all this time he had not seen Muriel except at a distance. At last, one day, he met her and her mother face to face, when they were out walking. They

stopped, and Muriel gave him her hand and smiling said,

‘ We haven’t seen you for such an age, Mr. Innes. Papa is full of your stopping the horses last March. He says you saved his life. When are you coming up to the Croft.’

Allan made light of his adventure with the ponies, and gave an evasive reply to the invitation.

‘ Will you come up to dinner on Thursday, Mr. Innes?’ said Mrs. Vivian. ‘ Miss Ventry is coming to stay with us on that day. Are you disengaged?’

Allan had to confess he was, and consequently had to accept, though if there was one thing more than another which he would have avoided if he could, it was meeting Miss Ventry.

‘ I shall have to go now,’ he said to himself, ‘ let me hope that a merciful Providence will grant that I do not take her in to, nor sit near her at dinner.’

Yes, luck was certainly against him. It was only half a victory that he had won after all. Nothing would shake him from his determination to leave at the end of the term, but he found it hard to refuse to tread the path that lay so fair and broad and open in front of him. Quite unconsciously he let things 'slide,' to put it vulgarly, and allowed himself to revel for the last time in the society of the girl who was the very light of his eyes.

'What does it matter after all?' he had said to himself. 'I may as well enjoy myself while I can. I can do nobody any harm except myself. It will be one short, sharp wrench, and then—— well, and then, heigh-ho, I don't quite know what it will be. I am weak, weak as water, I who thought myself so strong. I don't think I shall ever care to look at any other girl again. Oh, for one short five years, two years, one year of perfect bliss with you, my love, a heaven on earth, and then may

come all the terrors of eternal death, all the——’

Perhaps we had better not follow Allan in his ravings. One merely wishes to show that his victory over himself was not what one might call overwhelming.

He went to dinner and had the pleasure of seeing Muriel taken in to dinner by old Sir Lionel Pauncefoote, and of having Miss Ventry consigned to his own care. He debated if it would be possible to get up an epileptic fit, or show symptoms of hydrophobia, but the time was too short, and he had not rehearsed the part. He found himself at the opposite end of the table to Muriel, and on the same side of it. It was one of those wretched square tables, where conversation is impossible. Square tables ought to be abolished utterly from the face of the earth. When I say square, of course I mean oblong tables: for a small dinner-party anything but a round table is pure insanity. He resigned

himself to his fate. He found out long afterwards that Mrs. Vivian had got it into her head that he was in love with Miss Ventry, and out of pure good-nature (she could be good-natured, when it did not cost anything) she was always throwing them together, knowing that Miss Ventry was not indifferent to Allan.

Remarkably foolish notions do get into people's heads at times. Allan was silent for some time, from purely selfish motives; he could not bear the sound of Miss Ventry's loud, coarse voice. He again tried to fathom the mystery of Muriel's friendship for her, but after worrying the subject in his own mind for some time, he came to the conclusion that there was no solution to it; it was one of those mysterious things in human life, which will always remain a mystery. He did not care to believe Prettyman's theory.

‘You are silent, Mr. Innes.’

‘I am afraid I am a silent person by

nature, Miss Ventry. I feel stupid to-day. It is hot, and my work was troublesome. I shall be all right now that I have had a glass of champagne; nothing like champagne when one is in the "dumps."

'But you shouldn't get into the "dumps," as you call it; you are young, you are healthy, and I suppose your position at Llanwch is a pretty good one. What more can you want?'

'What indeed?' said Allan, smilingly.

'I hope Mr. Thomas will be coming down here soon,' she went on. 'I expect he and Muriel will be openly engaged this summer.'

'Oh, indeed,' said Allan, and inwardly cursed this fiend of a woman.

'It will be a very good match, don't you think, in every way? She is very fond of him, and he is immensely rich.'

Allan did not know what to say, he merely wished to change the subject, so he asked Miss Ventry if she was fond of

rabbits, and then nearly burst out laughing at the insanity of his own remark. She looked at him enquiringly, and said nothing. Soon after this the ladies withdrew, and Allan heaved a sigh of relief, and vowed that on no condition would he speak to Miss Ventry again that evening, and he did not, and had his reward.

The summer wore on. Thomas came down to Llanwch, and finding Miss Ventry literally hanging on to Allan's coat-tails, became all of a sudden friendly again. But Allan began to regard him with distrust. It was about this time that he began to discover many things of which he was previously ignorant. He discovered among other things that Miss Ventry was not indifferent to him, a fact, which had been obvious to the veriest outsider for weeks past. It was some time before he realised this: for Allan was not conceited, but, on the contrary, rather apt to consider himself a person of very minor

importance. He now seemed to be constantly meeting her, and to be left alone with her on picnics, or in the gardens at lawn-tennis parties. It was with the greatest difficulty that he restrained himself from being openly rude to her, and he was the last man in the world that would be willingly rude to a woman.

He said to Prettyman one night, just as they were going to bed,

‘That girl positively makes me ill. She is preposterous in whatever light you regard her. She must be twenty-seven if she’s a day, and she dresses as though she were fifteen. Her face, her voice, her manner are to me literally repulsive. She is atrocious. There ought to be a law prohibiting such people.’

Prettyman laughed loud and long, and said, ‘By Jove! I am sorry for you, Innes; she certainly is awful. But I don’t think she regards you in the same light. Good-night, old cock.’

Suddenly, one morning towards the end of term, she left, and Allan inwardly thanked heaven for a happy deliverance. The term was nearly at an end, and Allan was preparing himself for the wrench. Only a week more. One little week, and then probably never again would he look into the eyes he loved to see. It must be done, and the less he thought about it the better. He was thinking thus to himself in his rooms one evening; he was trying to make preparations for his departure, but he was restless and uneasy. The landlady came in and handed him a note, with the Vivian crest on the envelope. He did not know the handwriting. He opened it and read,

‘DEAR MR. INNES,

‘My mother has asked me to write to you to invite you to stay here for the first fortnight in August; there is a dance on the 7th, and another on the 11th.

I hope you will come. There are three meets of the otter-hounds, and some lawn-tennis parties, so it will not be very slow.

‘Yours sincerely,

‘MURIEL VIVIAN.’

Poor silly Allan. It was the first time he had ever received a note from her, and he raised it to his lips and kissed the signature. Well, well! I daresay it has been done before and will be done again.

Have you, my readers, ever had a terrible temptation? Have you ever had all the weight of delight, joy, happiness, sweetness that cannot be measured dragging you with soft, strong strands of silk in one direction, and Duty, stern, implacable, iron Duty on the other side? Duty uses no strands of silk or chains of steel to drag one. She merely holds up her hand as who should say ‘obey.’ It is hard to obey at the best of times; but when all the fays are whispering promises

of delight in your ear it is doubly, trebly hard. It was a terrible temptation for Allan, but he overcame it, for the time at least.

He sat down and began to write. He put a heading to his letter, then bit his pen, and began drawing figures on the paper. Then he rose, tore up the sheet of note-paper, and began pacing his room. Then he took a cigarette and lit it, took one puff and threw it away. Then he lit another and smoked it through, pacing his room the while. He made a move towards his writing-desk, stopped, and looked out of the window. There was a dog-fight in the street. That gave him no inspiration. Finally he dashed at his desk, scribbled a polite refusal hastily, ran out into the street without his hat, and posted it. After which he came back and sat in his arm-chair, with his head on his chest. At the end of twenty minutes or so he got up and walked to the window, and said aloud,

very distinctly and deliberately, 'Allan, my friend, you are a d——d fool.' He felt better after this, and began to whistle, and suddenly hearing sounds as of incipient earthquake in Bright's room, he went quietly to his door, locked and barred it. Then he began to wish that he had not answered that note in such a hurry. Much better to have thought about it a bit. Then he thought that perhaps it was better as it was, and finally went to bed, not knowing what to think.

The following morning, as he was coming out of the school gates, he met Muriel and her mother. He stopped and spoke to them. When he looked at Muriel, he again wished that he had not refused.

'We are so sorry you cannot come to us, Mr. Innes. We are going to have a very merry fortnight.'

Allan said that he had promised to go to Ardarrochar for the 12th.

'Then you can come at least till the 10th,

or you can miss one day's shooting, and stay till the morning of the 12th.'

Allan said that he had not thought of that.

'You will reconsider your refusal then?'

Throwing prudence to the winds he said he would, if he might. So he went to the Croft.

He had written to George to say that he would not be at Ardarrochar till the morning of the 13th. He gave himself up freely and unrestrainedly now to the enjoyment of Muriel's society. He had taken the plunge, and did not care much whether he were drowned or not. He banished from his mind completely the thought of separation. 'When it comes, it will come. I needn't think about it.' What a time it was! A time of intoxicating delight. To hear her speak, to be near her, to touch her soft hand, night and morning. To see the sun glint in her golden hair, to see the changing light in her violet eyes. Muriel was no Byronic maiden bounded by her Bible

and cookery-book. She could talk, and talk well, on many things. They talked and read together in the garden, on the lawn in the drowsy afternoon. Poor Allan! He was literally insane in the sublimity of his happiness.

On the day after the ball of the 7th, it was very hot and no one felt inclined to do anything. After dinner, Mrs. Vivian suggested that they should have their coffee in the summer-house: so they went. Mr. Vivian had some business to attend to, and did not come. Round the summer-house was a large, old shrubbery with pretty winding paths. After they had had coffee, Allan asked if he might smoke a cigarette, and they sat very silent for a while. Soon Mrs. Vivian, overcome by the fatigues of the previous night, went to sleep.

‘It is rather close in here, Mr. Innes, don’t you think? Shall we walk about under the trees?’ said Muriel.

‘ Yes, it would be nicer.’

They roamed about along the paths under the trees, and Allan told Muriel of Kirkaig and Dee and Tay, of Staffa and Iona, of the battles of the clans in the old days, till Muriel’s eyes brightened, and her breath came quick and short. She was dressed in a low-cut evening dress of soft Indian muslin of a delicate cream colour, and in her hair she wore a deep red rose. They strolled along in silence for a short time after this, and then Allan said quietly, in as indifferent a tone as he could muster,

‘ I am going to leave Llanweh this term, Miss Vivian. I sent in my resignation, to-day.’

He expected some commonplace expression of regret. But she never answered at all. It was getting dusk now, and Allan could not see her face very well; moreover, she had now averted it. Allan looked straight in front of him. He

was not feeling exactly happy. Suddenly he heard the sound of a suppressed sob from the maiden by his side. In an instant he had clasped her in his arms.

Muriel did not repulse him, but looked up through her tears, and said, 'Oh, Allan.'

Where was Allan's prudence now?

'My love,' he said. 'I never thought you cared a straw about me, or even thought of me, and I have loved you since I saw you at Llwyn Bridge nearly five years ago.'

'You always seemed so indifferent to me, Allan.'

'They told me you were engaged to Mr. Thomas, Muriel.'

'Who told you that?'

'Miss Ventry.'

'Ah!'

'But this is mere madness, my darling. Your father will never consent to our marriage. I must in common honesty go and speak to him now.'

‘Not to-night, Allan, not to-night. Let us have these few hours at least of happiness. My father is very fond of me, but I am afraid he has hopes that I will marry what he calls, well.’

Allan kissed away her tears, and these two poor deluded creatures wandered about with their arms about each other’s waists, in the shrubbery, ‘in lovers’ sweet content.’

Suddenly Allan bethought himself of the time.

‘Muriel, my darling, it is a quarter-past ten, and your mother is asleep in the summer-house still. Let me look at you once more, in case your father will not let me see you again to-morrow. I will love you for ever and ever, and I will work and work and make a name and a happy home for you.’

He held her in his arms and gazed at the sweet, fair face, the wavy, golden hair softly curled up over her low forehead; he looked deep down into the depths of

those large, liquid, violet eyes that beamed with love—a goddess indeed from her delicate, aquiline nose, her sweet, small mouth and slightly protruding chin down to her dainty feet that peeped out from below the feathers which formed the ruffle of her gown. One long, last kiss, and then a voice was heard calling, ‘Muriel, Muriel, come in; the dew is falling,’ and they saw Mrs. Vivian advancing down the walk in front of them.

‘My dear child, it is half-past ten, and I have been sleeping all this time in the summer-house. What have you been doing?’

Then she looked from Muriel to Allan, and from Allan back again to Muriel, and saw apparently in their faces that which she did not care to see, for she turned on her heel, with never another word, and marched stiffly into the house.

As they say that condemned men sleep soundly on the night before they are

going to be hanged, so did Allan sleep soundly on that night, having made up his mind to see Mr. Vivian before breakfast on the following morning. He knew that he should find him in the library at that time, as he was always an early riser and transacted what little business he had to do before breakfast, as a rule. It was with a quailing heart that he knocked at the library-door; he felt that he ought to knock, as, at that time of day, he thought it ought to be regarded as a private room. He had had a faint hope that he might have seen Muriel for a minute before he went in to her father, but it was not to be; and as he passed her room he heard, or thought he heard, the sound of sobbing.

A stern 'Come in,' in answer to his knock. He opened the door and said, 'Good-morning, Mr. Vivian,' and then, noticing Mrs. Vivian sitting by the window, he also greeted her. Mr. Vivian did not answer, and Mrs. Vivian bowed stiffly.

‘I wished to speak with you alone, Mr. Vivian.’

Mr. Vivian rose, and, putting one hand on the table, said,

‘My wife is here at my special request.’

Allan had an almost irresistible desire to burst out laughing, though at the time the feelings which excite laughter were very far removed from his mind. He had been reading ‘Aylmer’s Field’ to Muriel only yesterday, and the present situation struck him as being so exactly similar that it appeared ludicrous.

‘I know what you have to say,’ continued Mr. Vivian. ‘My daughter has been here with me already this morning. I wish to let you know at once that I consider your conduct in every way ungrateful, deceitful, and unbecoming a gentleman and a visitor in my house. You have mixed in society in this house which, I presume, you are not accustomed to,’—Allan winced at this—‘and you take ad-

vantage of the kindness extended to you to presume to put yourself on the same level as my daughter, and to steal away her love. You rendered me a service in the spring which I fully acknowledge. But what are you, sir? A beggarly school-master. Who are you, that you should dare to presume in the way you have done? I only wonder that my daughter has so far forgotten herself and her position as to suffer you to pay her attention. She is young, however, and the remembrance of this folly will doubtless soon pass off. I presume that you think that my daughter will have a large dowry. You are perfectly right, sir—if she marries according to my wishes.’ Here Allan made a gesture of impatience. ‘If she marries you, sir, not one single penny shall she have. But she shall *not* marry you, sir. From this time forward you shall have no communication with her by word of mouth or by letter. If you write to

her, your letters shall be burnt. If she writes to you, her letters shall never reach their destination. If you make any attempt to communicate with her in any other way, she shall go to a convent. My wife agrees with everything I say.'

Mrs. Vivian, sitting like a statue at the open window, 'with rotatory thumbs on silken knees,' merely bowed her head.

'And now, sir,' continued Mr. Vivian, barely able to contain his fury, 'you may go. This will be a lesson to me, at least, not to raise people out of the rank in life in which they happen to be. It is now a quarter to nine. The carriage is ordered at nine, and a train leaves Llanwch for Shrewsbury at 9.20. You may go, sir.'

Allan made as though he would speak, but an impatient stamp of the foot from Mr. Vivian showed him that any attempt at explanation would be hopeless. He must go, and Muriel's parents must always be under the impression that he had

deliberately set himself on winning Muriel's love from selfish, mercenary motives. The end of Allan's battle with his enemy was not as he had expected it to be. With a sad sigh he bowed to them both and left the room. He had already packed his portmanteau, and it and the carriage were waiting at the door. He tipped the butler, who knew all about it, and was sorry for him, and the Croft passed out of his sight for ever.

He took a third-class ticket mechanically, for London. He had no definite idea of where he was going, or of what he was going to do. He had only a sort of vague notion of making money and marrying Muriel.

Just as the train was on the point of starting, a girl rushed into the station and ran up to the train. Allan recognized her as Muriel's maid. He put his head out of the window and called to her. She ran up to him and thrust a note into his hand,

and said, 'God bless you, sir,' and the train moved off, Allan throwing a sovereign out of the window to the maid as she stood on the platform.

He was alone in the carriage, and he opened the note and kissed it. It contained only two lines, blurred and blotted with tears.

'MY DARLING,

'I will on no condition marry anyone but you, so long as you are alive.

'Your own

'MURIEL.'

With this somewhat doubtful consolation in his pocket, Allan went up to London.

CHAPTER XIV.

‘Hei mihi ! quod nullis amor est medicabilis herbis.’

DATES are all-important at this time : without accuracy we are lost. Allan arrived in London on the evening of the 9th of August. He had told George that he should be at Ardarrochar on the 13th. He drove to the Westminster Palace Hotel and dined, and then went out to the theatre. He tells me that on this day he does not remember anything very clearly except his interview with Mr. Vivian. He tried to blot out everything from his mind. He had no fixed plans. At one time he thought of Australia, then of South Africa, but rejected them. He had no money. He must do *something*. He must make money.

On the morning of the 10th he had breakfast, lit a cigarette, and went out. He wandered through Trafalgar Square into Pall Mall, up St. James's Street into Piccadilly. He walked slowly along Piccadilly until he came to the Green Park. He looked into the Park through the railings, and thought to himself that it looked very cool and tempting under the trees. So he went in and sat down on a seat under the trees facing the railings of the street, and tried to think. A woman with a fruit-stall was seated at the side of the street. It was very hot, and everyone was walking in the shade on the other side of the road. It being hot, the fruit woman was nodding gently, and presently she fell fast asleep. A beggar passed by, looked at the sleeping woman, then at the fruit, then down the street towards the Park and smiled, then up the street towards the Circus, saw a policeman, frowned, became virtuous, and passed on. Then two little girls came

to buy plums. They prodded the woman in the side with an old umbrella. The woman woke with a start and asked what they wanted.

‘Two-pence worth of plums, please.’

The woman selected the plums, those of the worst description, bruised and fast fading into rottenness.

‘Oh, mem, them ain’t good ’uns,’ said one of the little girls.

‘They’re all you’ll get; the flavour’s better when they’re a bit past. ’Ere ye are—where’s the money?’

The eldest little girl produced three half-pence and two farthings. The woman eyed the money narrowly, took one of the half-pence and rubbed it on the pavement, then tried to clean it with her apron, bit it, rang it on the curb, and then said,

‘This un’s a bad ’un.’

She deducted three plums but kept the half-penny, and the little girl left.

The woman fell asleep again after this,

and by-and-by a villainous-looking, stunted boy came along. He was probably about fourteen but looked twenty, and vice was stamped on every feature of his face ; one of those wizened, wicked-looking Arabs so common in the streets of London. This boy stopped short in front of the fruit-stall, and noticing that the woman was asleep, whistled softly to himself. He was a very cunning youth, this. He walked away about fifty yards with an air of the utmost unconcern, as though plums were the last thing in the world he would think of, then he turned and strolled carelessly and casually past the stall again, but as he passed, he abstracted two or three plums with lightning rapidity and passed on. When he had eaten them he came back from the opposite side and repeated the performance. He did this three or four times, and Allan was so amused at his dexterity that he did not think of stopping him. He did it once too often, however,

and was seen by a policeman who for some reason or other was strolling that way. It was on his beat, and, therefore, the very last place where he could be expected to be. As the boy walked away to eat his plums for the fourth time he saw the policeman bearing down upon him. The boy was a strategist. He apparently thought to himself, 'If I boldly go to meet the policeman and walk past him, he will think that I am innocent.' So he put his hands in his pockets and began to whistle. He mistook his man. The policeman grabbed him and said,

'Now then, my young buster, just shell out them plums.'

'Wot plums. S'help me Bob, I ain't got no plums.'

'Lyin' won't do no good—out with them.'

'Oh, sir,' whined the boy, 'I only took 'em for my poor sister, sir, who is dyin' o' the fever.'

'Gammon, I know all about that—out with 'em.'

The wretched creature produced three plums, and the policeman took him back to the stall and woke the old lady.

She jumped up with a start and began vehemently to protest that she had been in that place every summer for four years.

‘ All right, old lady, I ain’t goin’ to move yer on. This kid’s been stealing your plums.’

The woman instantly turned on the boy and began,

‘ You owdacious young varmint——’

Allan left. He had visions of a police-court, and himself as a witness, so he got up from his seat and walked aimlessly through the Green Park, and then turned into Piccadilly once more. As he strolled up the street he suddenly bethought him of a Schoolmasters’ Agency, but he did not know the name of the people nor where they lived. He went into the Isthmian Club, turned up a directory, found the address, and went out to find the office.

Allan tells me that of all the sad sights he ever saw in his life, this was the saddest sight he ever witnessed. He now knew of the hopelessness of one kind of schoolmastering, and had visions and hopes of something better for himself.

He was shown into a sort of outer office. Two or three clerks were busily writing at a table, and on the opposite side of the room were some chairs against the wall. Three men were seated on these chairs. One, an old man nearer sixty than fifty, wore the expression that Allan had come to know so well, only much more deeply engrained, on his face. It was a face of abject despair. His hair was almost white : he had a broad, intelligent-looking forehead and a long ragged beard, now too almost white. He was dressed in a suit of very much worn black, and his elbows were on his knees, and his head rested on his hands.

When Allan entered he raised his head, looked at Allan and sighed, and then fell to meditation again. Next him sat a German, fat, yet not so fat as he once had been, if one might judge from the fact that his clothes which were poor, and somewhat stained with grease, were hanging about him loosely. A strong smell of stale tobacco came from him. He wore an air of resignation, but he had evidently not yet despaired. He was about thirty-seven years of age, and as he sat in his seat he was restless, and was constantly throwing glances towards an inner door. He cleared his throat once or twice ostentatiously, in the way that Germans have. Next to him sat a young man of about twenty-two, very neatly and carefully dressed, and with a general air of hope and freshness about him. Was he not going to begin low and gradually rise to a height from which he could look down upon school agencies?

Allan sat down. In a few minutes one of the agents appeared. He was a kind, courteous, and studiously polite man. A flicker of hope just for one fleeting instant passed across the old man's face. The agent looked at him, and said kindly,

‘ I am very sorry, Mr. Aitchison, I have done my very best for you, but I am afraid there is nothing at present for which I can recommend you.’

‘ Remember that I will take literally anything, I don't care what it is, *anything*. I am very strong still ; good-morning,’ and the old gentleman left the room with a sigh.

There was a lump in Allan's throat as he watched the look of despair settle down on the kind old man's face, as he left the room.

‘ Have you something for me, yes ?’ said the German.

‘ I am afraid, Herr Baumann, that at

present there is nothing to suit you exactly. You see you have no degree which we recognize in England.'

'But I have been here fourteen months, and every day, every day, yes, I have come to you here, and always I have the same answer. Look at me, I am thin,' and he took the agent's hand and put it under his waistcoat. 'Do you see, I have lost stones, is it stones? yes, stones of weight, I cannot get my beer. Why will they not have me? I can speak English as you see, I can speak French better than English, and Spanish, and Italian, and German of course. What do you want more? I have very little money left.'

'There are so few posts that you would suit, Herr Baumann, and so many applicants for these posts. But we must wait, we must wait a little, and I don't doubt it will be all right.'

'Thank you, good-morning. Oh, I have

changed my address. I live now at 301, Mile End Road, Whitechapel. It is cheap, but oh, so nasty.'

The agent then came to the young man.

'I congratulate you, Mr. Biddlecombe. I had a letter from the head-master of Little Puddlington Grammar School this morning, and, after seeing you, he has decided to engage you. The salary is not large, but it is a start, it is a start.'

'Oh, I shall soon rise to better things than that,' said Biddlecombe; 'it is a beginning, and in four or five years I shall be all right. Thank you for your trouble; good-morning.'

And, with a smile and a light heart, Mr. Biddlecombe went out of the door.

'Well, sir, what can I do for you?' said the agent, turning to Allan. Allan told him his name and qualifications, and the agent said to him, 'There will be no difficulty in getting you a very good post,

Mr. Innes. Will you call to-morrow morning at twelve?’

Allan went out, and, when he got into the street, he said to himself,

‘I cannot, I will not do it.—And yet I must. There is nothing else. Good God! what a life to look forward to. I won’t.’

Oh, Allan, Allan, go home, you foolish fellow; go home to kind hearts and loving eyes.

He went down to the Isthmian Club, and had some lunch. He fell asleep after lunch, and, on awaking, picked up a paper. There was no one in the room. He read through it casually, and turned to the advertisement columns, and this caught his eye: ‘Wanted, at once, a tutor for a boy residing in the Canary Islands—must be of good physique. Salary by arrangement. Apply to Waxy and Co., 231, Lincoln’s Inn Fields.’

‘By Jove! the very thing,’ said Allan. ‘I have heard that there is money to be

made in the Canary Islands. I will apply.'

He took up his hat and went straight to Lincoln's Inn Fields. In an hour's time he had arranged to go to Canary.

'Can you start at once, Mr. Innes? A Donald Currie boat goes on the morning of the 13th; or do you want some time to make arrangements?'

'I can go at once—now, if you like. I have no arrangements to make.'

This, you will remember, was on the afternoon of the 10th. The steamer sailed in the early morning of the 13th, and he had to be on board on the evening of the 12th.

On the following morning he got his ticket from Mr. Waxy, who told him that he would have to pay for the other half of it, before going on board, at Messrs. Currie's offices in Fenchurch Street. He spent that day and the morning of the 12th in getting a few necessary things, and in the afternoon he went into the City to

pay the other half of his ticket. The clerk told him that the boat would miss the morning tide and not start until the evening, as her cargo was not quite ready. So Allan had another day to himself. He purposely did not write to anyone at home since, after making up his mind to go to Canary, he determined to lose himself, if possible, until he had made a position for himself. He would write to his mother from Canary, telling her that he was not coming home until he had made some money. He did not wish to have letters imploring him to return : all of which was very selfish, although to him it appeared the reverse. The fact of the date of the ship's departure helped him, as you will see, in this respect. The ship was going to start at half-past seven on the evening of the 13th. He would go down about six. He went to the Oval and saw the match between Surrey and Lancashire, and saw Sugg and Eccles smack the Sur-

rey bowling all over the place, and met heaps of old friends, to not one of whom did he breathe that he was going to leave the country. At about four in the afternoon he drove up to the club and had some tea, and at half-past five he left for the Westminster Palace Hotel, to get his luggage. As he was going out of the club, he met Ingersoll coming up the steps.

‘My dear Innes, I haven’t seen you for ages, Come back again into the club and have a talk. We can dine together.’

‘I can’t, Ingersoll, to-day. I must go now. Are you in town for any time?’ said Allan.

‘No; I am going up north to-night to Perthshire. No one but a lunatic is in town in the middle of August if he can help it. Come round at eight to-night, if you can, and see me off at Euston.’

‘I will come if I can, but don’t expect me.’

Ingersoll went into the smoking-room, looked out of the window for full ten minutes without moving, and then said, half-aloud,

‘Something wrong there, something devilish wrong there. I never saw a man so changed in my life. Wonder what has happened to him? Poor old Innes, one of the best souls that ever walked. Well, I must order dinner, I suppose.’

He dined in the almost deserted dining-room, and at ten minutes past eight started for Euston, naturally without Allan, who was at that moment standing on the deck of the *Ross-shire Castle*, idly watching the great ship being hauled out of dock.

After the tug had left her, and they were steaming down the river under a glorious harvest moon, Allan went down to his cabin.

At that time, he felt no regret at leaving England. All feeling for the time being for external things seemed completely

dead. He was simply wrapped up in one all absorbing subject, and that was—Muriel. He had her sad, weeping face always before his eyes. He was going to fight the world single-handed, and make his fortune, and then—but it is hopeless to try to follow him in his dreams of what would follow then. He was under the impression that if he could only get away from England, where everything is so cramped and crowded, he felt that he could do something great.

A new country, that is everything to the mind of the emigrant; free scope, where a man's talents will have their due reward. But the average of real, great success is probably somewhat smaller in a new land than it is in England, and the average of complete failures enormously greater. One hears of the successes in life quickly enough. Those who have failed are not anxious to blaze the fact abroad. After all, it is a confession of

weakness to leave England in order to seek one's fortune in other lands. It is a tacit inward acknowledgment that a man is a failure. Only the successful ones return in any numbers, despite the hungry longing for home that every Englishman worthy the name has for his own country. Hundreds upon hundreds, of young men especially, leave England full of hope and of bright visions of future wealth, who are never heard of again. Possibly some doubtful news arrives at home of a street brawl, or a quarrel in a whisky saloon, and of pistols and a hurried funeral. Loss of self-respect sends many of them to the bad. For the very poor at home it is of course the best thing possible; they cannot be worse off than they are. Educated men, younger sons of large families, hundreds of whom are sent to other lands of which they know nothing—these are they who, having no aptitude and no education for out-door life, find their way in a few

years to misery, drink, despair, and death. There was too much good in Allan to allow of anything of this sort, but for all that he was taking a very blind dive into fortune's lucky-bag when he left England with no definite prospect in front of him. He never thought of this, he thought only of the freedom of a new country. He sat on the edge of his bunk (there were but few passengers, and he was alone in the cabin), and took out of his pocket the little scrawl of a note, and read it for the fiftieth time :

‘ I shall never marry anyone but you, so long as you are alive.’

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS-URBANA



3 0112 051398219